MASCULINITIES AND PRIMARY SCHOOLING:

TWO CASE STUDIES

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DECLARATION

Chapter 5 appears in a modified form in an article entitled 'Learning to be 'Tough': the fostering of maleness in one primary school, *Gender and Education*, 1996, 8, 2, pp. 185-197.

Parts of Chapters 7 and 8 appear in an article entitled 'Primary Boys and Hegemonic Masculinities', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 1997, 18, 3, pp. 349-369.

SUMMARY

This thesis is a study of the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is constructed in two primary schools. Its principal perspective is feminist, though it draws heavily on the substantial body of work on masculinities within sociology. Connell's (1987) understanding of hegemonic masculinity which informs much of the work in this area, underpins the theoretical framework for conceptualising how a school constructs specific forms of masculinities which are powerfully shaped by ideologies and structures in wider society. The notion of 'critical incidents' is employed to ascertain how social processes come together in specific combinations in order to explore hegemonic and other modes of masculinities.

This study is a feminist analysis of masculinities in school settings. As such, methodological/theoretical issues occupy a central role.

The research on which the study is based was conducted with teachers and children in two primary schools located in different socio-economic areas of the same city. In one school the focus was on a class of 6-7 year olds, and in the other, on 9-10 year olds. The study adopts a qualitative methodology in the form of ethnography in order to explore teacher-pupil classroom behaviours and the peer relationships and social interaction of children, with a particular focus on boys.

The study both confirms findings of other research on masculinities and primary schools which show the importance of locale on constructions of hegemonic masculinity and draws attention to previously unacknowledged issues. Locating the research in a middle- and a working-class school enabled a comparison of the ways in which the characteristics of a social area influence the processes of masculine constructions in a school. Also, the study considers the impact of the Education Reform Act (1988) on constructions of dominant masculinities in schools. Importantly, these two ethnographic case studies have been undertaken from a feminist position and the researcher's relationships with, and explorations of the relationships between, male teachers and boys contribute new insights into how hegemonic masculinity is constructed, at the level of the school, through various discourses.

INTRODUCTION

Gender issues within education gradually came to the fore after the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. This legislation provided feminists working in education with an opportunity to open up debates about inequalities in schooling for girls. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there appeared a wealth of literature detailing the ways in which girls experienced an unequal and discriminatory education in relation to boys. Early studies of primary schooling (Sharp & Green, 1975; King, 1978; Hartley, 1985) made reference to sex differences in terms of teacher attitudes, pupil behaviours and, management and organisational practices but 'boys' and 'girls' were discussed as homogenous groups. Pollard's (1985) case studies of three primary schools demonstrated that the picture regarding gender was more complex than had been suggested but it was feminist investigations which illuminated the ways in which 'femininity' (and to a lesser extent, 'masculinity') was constructed in primary schooling (Delamont, 1980; Hough, 1985; Clarricoates 1987). Analyses of gender relations in primary schools which considered gender *as* difference rather than gender differences (Griffin & Lees, 1997) were relatively few (for an exception see Thorne, 1993).

However, in the mid 1990s there was a shift in focus in the educational press away from the educational disadvantages of girls to the academic underachievement and alienation of boys across both the primary and secondary age range (Skelton, 1998a). This concern was most evident in media coverage of examination results (Weiner, Arnot & David, 1997) and since this time the whole question of boys' underachievement has been recognised as a problem demanding intervention by government education ministers (Morris, 1996; Byers, 1998).

Although in the early part of the 1990s, when this present study on masculinities and primary schooling was being formulated, there was some evidence that girls' GCSE examination results were starting to overtake those of boys (Cresswell, 1990; Stobart, Elwood & Quinlan, 1992) it had yet to attract media and government attention. Yet, in the same period shifts in educational and gender discourses suggested that explorations of masculinities in primary schooling were required, particularly by feminists, if gender equity strategies already in place were to be sustained and built upon. These shifts in discourse were:

- The development of 'men's studies'/studies of masculinity and schooling

- The marketisation of schools and the moves towards school improvement and effectiveness

Feminists had long argued that a 'male norm' underpinned the structure, pedagogy and curriculum of educational institutions (Spender, 1982; Davies, 1984; Mahony, 1985; Lees, 1986). However, more recent research into masculinity has indicated that this 'male norm' is much more complex than implied in those early feminist studies by showing that schools are sites where multiple masculinities are constructed, negotiated, challenged and re-constructed (Walker, 1988; Abraham, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1996a). These studies, in the main, concentrate on the secondary years of boys' education. The findings of such research suggests that schools *indirectly* play a part in constructions of masculinities through their methods of streaming, their conventional adoption of male-centred authority/management patterns and through the traditional, white, middle-class nature of the academic curriculum. At the same time,

Connell (1989) argues that schools have only a *minor* part to play in the creation of masculinities. Drawing on evidence provided by young men from different social class backgrounds he states:

> The school is probably not the key influence in the formation of masculinity for most men. In most cases in the study I would judge the childhood family, the adult workplace or sexual relationships (including marriage) as being more potent. (p. 301)

However, he goes onto say that "Nevertheless, schooling is the next most powerful influence across the board, and in some cases and some situations it is decisive" (Connell, 1989, p. 301). It should be reiterated that Connell's study was focused on a group of young men who had recently left secondary education.

In this study by Connell (1989), and those undertaken by Walker (1988), Abraham (1989), Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Parker (1996), the main concern is to articulate the ways in which boys construct masculinities within school settings. For example, Walker describes his book as "a study of male youth cultures in a particular school" (1988, p.3), whilst Mac an Ghaill states "The research focuses upon the confusions and contradictions that are constitutive of the students' construction of gendered and sexual identities" (1994, p.13), and Parker says his study attempts "to uncover the fundamental features of masculine construction within the lives of two groups of adolescent males" (1996, p.141). These studies, particularly the work of Mac an Ghaill, do locate these constructions of masculinity within broader social, cultural and institutional patterns but the emphasis is on boys' construction of their masculine subjectivities. There are three issues

emerging from these studies which are fundamental to this present research.

Firstly, the research findings of these investigations into masculinities and secondary schooling cannot be generalised to primary schools. Connell's (1989) suggestion that the adult workplace and sexual relationships have greater impact on constructions of masculinities than schools may be accurate, but as they are not immediately relevant to the lives of primary age boys then it might be assumed that schools play a different, and possibly more significant, role in the development of masculinities for young boys.

Secondly, analyses of masculinities and secondary schooling take into account how the effects of 'market forces' and the introduction of the National Curriculum (1988) have produced new ways of being a male student (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, 1996b; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996). This restratification of the state school system has also impacted upon the structure and organisation of primary schools, for example, the adoption of separate subject teaching at Key Stage 2 (Lee & Croll, 1995). At the time this present study was being formulated there was an absence of research which considered the implications of the Educational Reform Act (ERA) 1988 on gender in primary schools, and even by the end of the 1990s this area remains remarkably unexplored (for a notable exception see Connolly, 1998a). Yet as has been implied by the work of Mac an Ghaill (1994), Haywood & Mac an Ghaill (1996) and Ball and Gewirtz (1997), it is imperative that studies of gender relations and of the constructions of femininities and/or masculinities in primary schooling consider the implications of educational reforms.

The third issue which arises from these studies of masculinties and secondary schooling relates to *who* the researcher is and *what* perspective they are writing from. That these were men researchers interviewing young men facilitated their ability to gain access to the kinds of data required to draw conclusions about constructions of masculine subjectivities. Although the situation is less clear for men researchers investigating constructions of masculine identities with primary age boys, Paul Connolly (1995a) indicates that differences in age and perceived status influences the relationships which adult male researchers have with young boys. When gender is introduced as a further variable then questions arise as to the extent to which a female researcher would be able to elicit the necessary data to inform understandings of the ways in which primary age boys construct masculine subjectivities.

A further but related point is what is meant when a study of masculinities and primary schooling claims to be undertaken from a feminist perspective. Although there are many different feminisms, they all share a commitment to improving the lives of women (Gordon, 1979; Tong, 1989; Whelehan, 1995). In order to do this clearer understandings of masculinities and male practices are required. As Joyce Canaan and Christine Griffin argue:

> It is especially important that we comment on (The New Men's Studies), which explores the masculinity that so oppresses us and claims to stem from and build on feminist work . . . As men begin studying men, feminists must continue to do so . . . (1990, p. 207)

As will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, a commitment to feminist principles has shaped the whole research process of this present study from initial formulation of research questions to the writing up of the final thesis. In making the claim that this study is written from a feminist perspective is not to side-step the debates surrounding what is meant by feminist research. As Troyna (1993) argued:

> . . . there is little that unites (educational) researchers working from antiracist/feminist perspectives beyond a compelling concern to interrogate and account for racial and gender inequalities. (p.4)

In keeping with Troyna's suggestion that it is futile to attempt to construct an homogenous antiracist/feminist 'voice', this study offers instead a broad characterisation of research written from a particular position:

> . . . research can be feminist if it: draws on feminist theory; centres on gender (and its relation to heterosexuality, 'race' and class); exposes power relationships in the structuring of difference and inequalities; and if the research can be transformative. (Skeggs, 1992, p.6)

A specific area of exploration could be discerned when these factors were considered together: that the research was to be informed by feminism; that previous investigations into masculine subjectivities had been undertaken by men; and that the recognition of the influences of educational reforms on gender/masculinities in primary schools had not been remarked upon although they had been revealed as fundamental in studies of secondary schooling.

The intention of this study was to revisit the assertion made in earlier feminist studies that schools uphold normative conceptions of masculinity, and to explore this notion in the light of the more recent research into masculinities. Specifically, the aim was to investigate the ways in which the 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1987; see Chapter 1) of a *school* is constructed through broader social processes, including the influence of the community, local culture, and educational policy and provision. Given that hegemonic masculinity is achieved through a state of play of social forces then, as active agents, consideration is given to how the boys in the schools negotiated with, challenged and reconstructed dominant versions of masculinity. The research also aimed to consider girls in relation to hegemonic masculinity, both in terms of how they were positioned within dominant versions of masculinity and how they negotiated with, interacted or challenged predominant modes of masculinity.

That the impact of masculinities on the lives of girls and women are seen as central is reflected in the structure of this thesis.

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first section is a review of the literature. In Chapter 1 the literature on current perspectives of masculinities and schooling is explored. The chapter initially considers the areas of schooling which feminists have concentrated on. The discussion then focuses on the ways in which 'masculinities' are currently being theorised and moves on to consider the ways in which these theoretical positions have illuminated aspects of 'maleness' in relation to schooling. It will also discuss the various solutions to, and strategies for, tackling boys' underachievement at primary and secondary stages of education. In terms of primary boys these have been developed without

recourse to the few studies which have been in the public domain in recent years (Connolly, 1994a, 1995a; Jordan, 1995; Redman, 1996).

The second section explores the methodological framework of the research. It is conventional to offer one methodology chapter. However, two chapters considering the theoretical underpinnings and the application of research processes were seen as appropriate. Chapter 2 looks at how the study has been informed by understandings of feminist research, particularly regarding questions of what is 'knowable'. Chapter 3 outlines methodological issues in the data collection and analysis and relates these to feminist research processes. A significant point arising in Chapter 3 is the issue of 'power' which is a crucial concern of feminisms. It is significant for this study in terms of the differential power relationships across age, gender, culture and social class.

Section 3 is the findings of the two case study schools. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 arise from the case study of Benwood Primary School where the focus was on a class of Year 2 children. Chapters 7 and 9 are based on the case study of Deneway Primary School, particularly observations of a Year 5/6 class.

Section 4 is the concluding chapter where the findings of the two case study schools are summarised and, where appropriate, common themes and disparities have been identified.

Throughout this study the words 'masculinity' and 'masculinities' have been used interchangeably. Hearn (1996) questions the undefined way in which these terms are frequently used in the literature (see Chapter 1) and the decision as to when either is adopted is based on grammatical 'flow'. When either is used it can be taken that the plurality of 'being, knowing,

understanding and enacting' maleness in relation to structural, collective and individual male practices is understood and recognised.

SECTION 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 1

MASCULINITIES AND SCHOOLING

Sociologists of education have long argued that whatever is considered to be of concern in schools at any one historical point is a reflection of the existent relationship between the economy, culture and politics (Brown *et al*, 1997). In the late 1990s the focus on school improvement and effectiveness placed the spotlight on the attainments of pupils in individual schools thus revealing that boys, across both primary and secondary phases, were not 'achieving' to the same extent as girls. This prompted media and government interest in boys' underachievement (Gallagher, 1997; Byers, 1998; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998) and generated a rapid increase in materials aimed at improving boys' academic performance and their attitudes and behaviours towards schooling (Hannan, 1996; Bleach *et al.*, 1996; Bradford, 1997; Pickering, 1997).

It can be seen in Table 1 how "shifts of emphasis concerning gender are locked into and produced by certain prevalent discourses of education at different historical periods" (Weiner, Arnot & David, 1997, p. 623) and that the 'underachieving boy' has historically occupied a place, both overtly and covertly, in discourses on gender and education. Also, there is a long history of academic interest in the education and schooling of boys (Benson, 1874; Romilly, 1937; Talboys, 1943; Blishen, 1955; Mangan, 1981; Heward, 1988).

Table 1

Historical period	Prevalent discourses of education	Prevalent discourses of gender and education
1870 to early 1900s	inequality of opportunity: provision informed by gender and social class	informed by social class (boys' public roles; girls' domestic roles)
1920s , 1930s	different but equal	differentiation on basis of social class and 'natural' skills, abilities etc.
1940s, 1950s	equality of opportunity: IQ testing (focus on access)	weak (emphasis on equality according to 'intelligence')
1960s, 1970s	equality of opportunity: progressivism/ mixed ability (focus on process)	weak (emphasis on working-class, male disadvantage)
1970s to early 1980s	equality of opportunity: gender, race, disability, sexuality etc. (focus on outcome)	equal opportunities/anti-sexism (emphasis on female disadvantage)
Late 1980s early 1990s	choice, vocationalism and marketization (focus on competition)	identity politics and feminisms (emphasis on femininities and masculinities)
Mid-1990s to date	school effectiveness and improvement (focus on standards)	performance and achievement (emphasis on male disadvantage)

Source: Adapted from Weiner, Arnot & David, 1997, p. 622

However, over the past 30 years, second-wave feminists have focused research and discussions on the unequal and discriminatory educational experiences of girls.

Following the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975 various feminist perspectives concerned themselves with girls' *access to, treatment in* and *outcome of* their education (Byrne, 1978; Deem, 1981; Arnot, 1987). Around the time the Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988 was passed the literature on gender and education concentrated on two main areas: that which critiqued earlier research into girls' schooling which had spoken of girls as homogeneous (Jones, 1993; Middleton, 1993; Mirza, 1995); and that which focused on the effects of ERA and the National Curriculum on equal opportunities. Whilst the highlighting of *difference* as a way of

exploring female (and male) individual subjectivities (Weedon, 1987; Butler, 1990; Ramazanoglu, 1993) proved useful in that they offered ways of exploring individual experiences which could encompass social class, gender, 'race', religion, sexuality, ability etc., they simultaneously denied the possibility of shared experiences and subordinated positionings. This rendered the whole conception of feminism as a political movement unviolable; a situation which was addressed and re-worked as the 1990s progressed.

As was said earlier, the emphasis in educational debates in the mid- to late-1990s on school effectiveness and school improvement has led to the current concern with 'boys' underachievement' by the government (Morris, 1996; Byers, 1998). Although feminist research, specifically radical feminist explorations of classroom interactions, has offered insights into masculinity there has been a tendency towards constructing 'boys' as a homogeneous group (Weedon, 1987; Lown, 1995). Thus, it is fair to say that concepts of masculinity have been written into the literature as a shadowy 'other' which were there to enable the exploration of constructions of femininities. It is only recently that attempts have been made to theorise men and masculinities; specifically from men writing within the frameworks of 'men's studies' and, alternatively, the 'study of men' (Kimmel, 1987; Hearn & Morgan, 1990). The impact of these theories in informing understandings of masculinities and schooling is beginning to be seen (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Jordan, 1995; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Parker, 1996; Redman, 1996; Arizpe & Arnot, 1997; Heward, 1997; Renold, 1997; Connolly, 1994a, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a).

There are three sections in this chapter which consider knowledge and understandings of masculinities and schooling. The first section reviews

theories of gender identity, including recent perspectives on theorising masculinities in order to identify those which appear to be the most useful for this present study. Consideration will be given to how these perspectives are manifest in materials and resources intended to address boys' underachievement.

The second section reviews the literature on boys and schooling in order to elicit the main areas of research interest; that is *gender regimes* (Kessler *et al.*, 1985) and male peer group cultures. As boy pupils are not the only 'bearers of masculinity' in schools, the third section looks at the available information on men teachers and masculinities.

Theorising Masculinity

A consideration of recent literature identifies a range of ways of conceptualising masculinity. Clatterbaugh (1990) identifies six main theoretical perspectives on masculinity:

- conservative
- pro-feminist,
- men's rights,
- spiritual,
- socialist
- group-specific

Messner (1997) offers similar categories, plus two more recent responses which appear to have emerged as a challenge to feminism and are located within a feminist backlash position: the mythopoetic movement based on the ideas in Robert Bly's (1990) book *Iron John;* and the Promise Keepers, a

religious response which draws on notions of 'Muscular Christianity', a term used to describe those organizations which emerged around the turn of the century whose aim was to "revirilize the image of Jesus and thus remasculinize the Church" (Kimmel, 1996, p.177). Whilst Clatterbaugh and Messner's descriptors of six/eight main approaches to theorising masculinity are useful, not all writings can be neatly slotted into one or other of the categories. Also, neither Clatterbaugh nor Messner engage with *how* the concept of masculinity or masculinities is understood by the various perspectives, or even if there are any shared understandings within or across the different positions. Before looking at the main categories in any depth, a more considered exploration of *how* the concept of masculinity or masculinities is used in the literature is necessary in order to understand the kinds of 'solutions' to the 'problem of maleness' offered by each of the perspectives.

The term 'masculinity' or 'masculinities', (to convey the multiplicity of male 'ways of being'), is currently used by a number of disciplines which have a relevance to education, such as psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology and history. That many disciplines find 'masculinity' (or 'masculinities') a useful concept to describe constructions and manifestations of 'maleness' is evident but there are a number of problems with the way in which it is used. As Hearn (1996) points out, these problems include:

- the wide variety of the uses of the concept

- the imprecision of its use in many cases

- its use as a shorthand for a very wide range of social phenomena, and in particular those that are connected with men and males but which appear to be located in the individual

- the use of the concept as a primary and underlying cause of other social effects (p. 203)

As Wetherell and Griffin (1995) have shown in their research into how men are exploring masculinity, the key areas of dispute between psychologists, social psychologists, sociologists etc. lies around their theorization of male power. Their research shows how the four male psychologists they interviewed held two differing conceptions of masculinity; one definition located masculinity as an 'essence' linked to experiences of living in a male body, and the other definition centred around notions of gender socialization and humanistic psychology. Both definitions draw heavily on sex-role theory. In contrast, male sociologists were convinced that sex-role socialisation theories were inadequate and they were more persuaded by theories which expressed complex relationships between the psychic and the social, such as those located within post-structuralism. Male psychologists' use of the term 'masculinity' placed the emphasis on the individual, and hence the personal, whilst male sociologists were more likely to politicise their discussions of masculinity and made greater use of the term 'masculinities'. This research by Wetherell and Griffin indicates that although the conceptions of 'masculinity' or 'masculinities' convey different meanings and understandings within and across traditional disciplines, they are rarely explicitly defined.

The important point here is that education, as itself a pluralist discipline, makes use of the understandings of various concepts as defined by the 'traditional' disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, to provide a basis for its own understandings, policies and practices. Thus, the differing perspectives on 'masculinity' can be found in studies of gender relations in schooling and have subsequently generated different approaches to ways of addressing such issues as sexual harassment and boys' underachievement. These different approaches can be seen by considering sex role socialisation theories and the more complex theories of sexual/gender identity formation.

Sex-Role Socialisation and Identity

The idea that girls and boys are socialised into their gender roles occupied a central place in educational literature during the late 1970s and into the 1980s (Lobban, 1978; Delamont, 1980; Jacklin, 1983). Indeed, as Connell (1987) has shown, one of the first effects of feminism was to increase the volume of sex-role and sex-difference research. It was notions of sex-roles and socialisation theories that came to underpin liberal feminist theory which has proved to be the most influential form of feminism in terms of educational policy (Measor & Sikes, 1992; Weiner, 1994). The importance accorded to concepts of sex-roles in liberal feminist writing was also to be found in the literature associated with the 'men's movement' of the same period (Farrell, 1974; Pleck, 1976).

Role theories argue that children learn 'appropriate' ways of relating to the world around them through observation and/or experiencing a system of rewards and sanctions which reinforce such behaviours (Gregory, 1969). According to the developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1965), identity emerges as a result of an individual's capacity to trust the world, and

achieves fruition during adolescence, but is more than the sum of childhood identifications. Within developmental psychology, identity is characterised as the result of the solution of conflicts in life.

With regard to sex roles, this means females learning and internalising such traits as caring, nurturing and selflessness, whilst males acquire and demonstrate characteristics such as aggression, independence and competitiveness (Oakley, 1972; Byrne, 1978; Seidler, 1989). Social-learning theorists expounded the view that gender identity was learned by children modelling their behaviour on same-sex images in family, peer group, and the media (Sharpe, 1976; Raskin & Israel, 1981; Ashton, 1983). Alternatively, cognitive-development theorists maintained that a child's conceptualisation of gender was dependent upon his or her stage of cognitive development. This view was one forcefully argued by Lawrence Kohlberg.

Kohlberg (1966) drew on Piaget's work on cognitive-development to develop a theory of children's sexual cognition. He accounted for young children's avoidance of opposite sex behaviours not in terms of reinforcement strategies but in relation to Piaget's use of object constancy. So, in the same way that children at a particular cognitive stage believed that a piece of plasticine changed weight when it changed shape, they would also believe that if a child dressed or played in a sex-inappropriate way its sex also changed (Emmerich *et al.*, 1977). According to theorists subscribing to Kohlberg's explanation of sexual cognition, children's need to maintain a secure gender identity ensured they would strenuously resist cross-sex behaviours in themselves and in other children (Serbin, 1983; Hough, 1985). It is this theory which has propounded the idea that sexism is at its peak in children aged 5-6 years (Sayers, 1984), although a

more considered analysis of this research suggests that it is at this age when children acquire the notion that gender is 'fixed' rather than fluid (Short & Carrington, 1989; Lloyd & Duveen, 1992).

The benefit of adopting sex-role theories as a means of explaining gender behaviours and relationships was that these theories offered the potential for change. Rather than differences between males and females being based solely on biological assumptions about masculinity and femininity, sex-role theories suggested that both sexes were oppressed through 'agencies of socialization': families; schools; media; peer groups (Pleck, 1981). The solution offered was to change the expectations of traditional gender roles.

When sex-role theories were at their peak in the late 1970s and 1980s, the focus in schools was on changing *girls'* perceptions and expectations of themselves. Although different feminisms held differing views as to how to tackle gender inequalities in schooling, it was conceptions of traditional sex-role socialisation (as in liberal feminism) which held sway. The limitations of this perspective for exploring gender relations have been widely rehearsed (Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985; Segal, 1990; Connell, 1995). A summary of the main limitations of this work in British schools has been provided by Arnot (1991) who argued that:

> Sex-role socialisation, which held together a multitude of projects as diverse as changing school texts, and establishing gender fair teaching styles, non-traditional role models, unbiased careers' advice and girl-friendly schools was seen to have a lot to answer for (-). The simplicity of its portrayal of the processes of learning and of gender identity

formation, its assumptions about the nature of stereotyping, its somewhat negative view of girls as victims had all contributed to the creation of particular school based strategies. These strategies although designed to widen girls' and boys' horizons, and give them more opportunities in life were somewhat idealistic in intention and naive in approach. (p. 453)

Whilst feminists have argued that remediation strategies based on sex-role socialisation theories are inadequate, it is evident from some of the materials produced for addressing issues of masculinity in schooling that these strategies continue to occupy an influential position.

It is useful to return to Clatterbaugh's (1990) six perspectives of ways of theorising about masculinity to illustrate how sex-role theories inform particular ways of tackling boys' attitudes and motivations towards schooling.

Socialisation Theories, Masculinity and Schooling

For the purposes of discussing the literature on masculinity and education, Clatterbaugh's (1990) six classifications of ways of theorising masculinity (the conservative, the pro-feminist, the men's rights, the spiritual, the socialist and the group-specific) can usefully be grouped into two main strands. These two main strands can loosely be considered as concerned with 'personal' and 'political' constructions of masculinity and, as masculinity is defined in relation to femininity, then each of these strands has implications for how girls and women are perceived. These implications can be adjudged from the 'solutions' offered by each position on ways of being and becoming male.

The 'conservative', 'spiritual' and 'men's rights' perspectives emphasise the 'personal' aspects of masculinity whereby individual maleness is restricted or oppressed in some way. In terms of education, the predominant influence is that of the 'men's rights' perspective (Bleach *et al.*, 1996; Hannan, 1996). Here dominant versions of masculinity are seen to be damaging boys physically and psychologically. These 'personal' perspectives argue that restrictive versions of masculinity push boys towards aggressive, competitive behaviours in interpersonal relationships, whilst simultaneously promoting *laissez-faire* approaches to school and academic work. Although there are strengths about these 'personal' approaches to theorising masculinities, in that educators are encouraged to explore relationships between masculinity, subject and career choice, achievement, discipline and violence (Kenway, 1997b), there are also some problems.

These 'personal' approaches focus on individuals and tend to ignore broader social structures and issues related to power, particularly structural inequalities between males and females. Such approaches tend to invoke a 'competing victims' discourse whereby boys at school in the 1990s are seen to be as, if not more, oppressed than girls have been. So, rather than strategies being developed which work in cooperation with feminist approaches to educational inequalities, supporters arguing from this position place boys at the centre. Such solutions to addressing the problems boys may be experiencing with masculinity can not only marginalise girls but, occasionally, rehearse the gendered pedagogies and practices found to be operating in schools in the 1970s. For example, what *may* be considered good classroom practice is portrayed as methods specific to encouraging boys, such as providing pupils with access to different learning methods:

> Develop more activity-based or experiential approaches to learning. A balanced and differentiated repertoire of styles, such as practical investigations, oral work and role-play, would hold greater appeal for boys' interest and imagination. (Bleach *et al.*, 1996, p.24)

At the same time, an observation made by the working party involved with the National Numeracy Project (TES 12.12.97) (which did not appear in the final report) suggested that girls in the primary school were underperforming during the whole class teaching of the numeracy hour. This raises the question of the extent to which different pedagogical approaches to particular curriculum subjects are influenced by gender and can impede children's progress (Gipps & Murphy, 1994). In the research report by Bleach *et al* (1996) just mentioned, recommendations are made that subvert the findings of feminists which show that in the classroom girls' needs are often ignored. They frequently experience difficulties in mixed sex groups where boys are monopolising equipment, the teacher's time and demonstrating intimidatory or harassing behaviours (Clarricoates, 1983; Jones, 1985; Frith & Mahony, 1994). The recommendations by Bleach *et al* are that:

> It should go without saying that rewards and recognition must be of a type held in esteem by boys of particular ages . . Prominent displays of different facets of boys' involvement in school life is one approach. (p.25)

> Various approaches are being explored . . . for encouraging . . . boys to maintain a positive attitude . . . These include . . . giving boys a high profile in showing visitors around or

> performing in public, pairing boys with girls in group work to expose them to the 'feminine' skills of language and reflection . . . (p.25)

Although sex-role theories continue to influence some of the, particularly psychological, work on gender identities and education (see, for example, Lloyd and Duveen, 1992), an alternative way of theorising identity has attempted to explain the complex social and psychological processes involved in the development of boys' and girls' gendered subjectivities.

Deconstructing Masculinity and Identity Theory

The 'men's rights' approach to theorising and addressing masculinities in educational settings contrasts with the position to be found in what Clatterbaugh (1990) refers to as pro-feminist, socialist and 'specific group' perspectives. This position can be found in the educational literature on masculinities which recognises the imbalances in power between males and females, and males and males. This literature focuses on the broader social structures and the different ways of being male that emerge from different cultural groups e.g. social class, age, ethnicity, age, as well as the connections between them. The most influential and convincing discussions on the construction of masculinities have been offered by Connell (1987, 1995, 1997).

Connell's (1995) starting point is that gender is a way in which social practice is ordered. His argument that "Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body" (p. 71) apparently agrees with sex-role theory. However, he develops this theory further through his concept of *gender projects*.

For Connell, social practice interacts with, and is responsive to, particular situations as well as being generated within definite structures of social relations. He argues that gender relations are one of the major organising structures of all societies. The social practice which relates to this structure occurs as a result of people grappling with their historical situations as a group and is not the result of individual actions. Connell defines the notion of *gender projects* as:

> . . . processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting-points in gender structures . . . We find the gender configuring of practice however we slice the social world, whatever unit of analysis we choose. The most familiar is the individual life course, the basis of the common-sense notions of masculinity and femininity. (1995, p. 72)

The 'configuration of practice' here is based on psychoanalytic concerns with 'personality' and 'character' and, as Connell goes onto say, any theoretical approach to gender which focuses on one area exaggerates the coherence of practice that can be achieved at any one site. Rather, as Butler (1990) amongst others have suggested, gender is an internally complex structure, where a number of different logics are superimposed. Thus Connell argues for a three-fold model of the structure of gender relations, which distinguish relations of *power*, *production* and *cathexis* (emotional attachment).

In drawing on all three areas it can be shown that:

> . . . masculine identities are not static but historically and spatially situated and evolving. They arise through an individual's interaction with both the dynamisms and contradictions within and between immediate situations and broader social structures . . . (Kenway, 1997b, p. 59).

This model provides a means of considering power relations that exist between men and men as well as between males and females. Whilst Connell acknowledges that there are many modes of masculinity, it is possible to identify certain configurations of masculinity on the basis of general social, cultural and institutional patterns of power and meaning, and to discern how they are constructed in relation to each other. These masculinities are defined as *hegemonic, complicitous, subordinate* and *marginal.*

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept which draws on Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Hegemonic masculinity describes the mode of masculinity which at any one point is 'culturally exalted' (Connell, 1995); that is, it refers to those dominant and dominating modes of masculinity which claim the highest status and exercise the greatest influence and authority. Hegemonic masculinity is a position which is achieved as a result of collective cultural and institutional practices, and asserts its authority through these practices particularly through the media and the state (Kenway, 1997b). Hegemonic masculinity is not 'fixed'; it is in a constant state of flux and constantly needs to be achieved by dominating, not obliterating, alternative patterns and groups. Of particular significance then is that hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and subordinated masculinities and is heterosexual. As such, hegemonic masculinity structures dominant and subordinate relations across and

between the sexes, as well as legitimising patriarchy. Kenway & Fitzclarence (1997) have suggested that certain characteristics can be associated with hegemonic masculinity:

> At this stage of Western history, hegemonic masculinity mobilises around physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality. (p. 121)

Of importance here is the phrase 'mobilises around' as this indicates there is no *one* form of hegemonic masculinity although all forms may draw upon, exaggerate, modify and distort these aspects.

Hegemonic masculinity defines what it means to be a 'real' man or boy, and other forms of masculinity are seen in relation to this form. It is important to note here that hegemonic masculinity is not something embodied within individual male personalities. As Connell (1987) points out, the fantasy figures suggested by the film characters of John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart bore no relation to the personalities of the actors. Rather, hegemonic masculinity is the public face of male power. Not all men or boys attempt to engage with, or even wish to aspire to, the rigorous standards demanded by hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, all men benefit from the *patriarchal dividend* (Connell, 1995, p. 79) which is the advantage men gain from the overall subordination of women without actually being at the forefront of the struggles involved with hegemonic masculinity. Connell refers to that cluster of masculinities whereby men

reap the benefits of hegemonic masculinity without actively seeking or supporting it as *complicitous* masculinities.

Standing in direct contrast to hegemonic masculinity is *subordinate* masculinity. In this category are those masculinities which are oppressed and repressed by hegemonic masculinity. Such masculinities stand outside of the circle of the legitimate forms of maleness represented in hegemonic masculinity. For example, gay masculinity is a form of subordinate masculinity, indeed any aspect of a masculinity which suggests an attachment with femininity can find itself in this category. Also, these forms of masculinity are likely to attract violence from men attached to other, more aggressively dominant forms of masculinity.

Hegemonic, complicitous and subordinate masculinities, as defined here, are concerned with, and related specifically to, the internal mechanisms by which gender is ordered. However, the interrelationship of gender with other major social structures such as class and 'race' creates further complex associations between masculinities. To explain masculinities at the intersection of gender, 'race' and social class, Connell (1995) uses the concept of *marginalised* masculinities. Connell refers here to the relations between dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups. Marginalised masculinities are contingent upon the sanctioning of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group. Connell offers the following as examples of this dynamic process in operation:

> . . . in the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does not yield social authority to black men generally. . . The

relation of marginalization and authorization may also exist between subordinated masculinities. A striking example is the arrest and conviction of Oscar Wilde . . . Wilde was trapped because of his connections with homosexual working-class youths, a practice unchallenged until his legal battle with a wealthy aristocrat, the Marquess of Queensberry, made him vulnerable. (1995, p. 81)

Connell's theorising has then identified two forms of relationship through which specific modes of masculinity can be analysed. There is the relationship between hegemony, domination/subordination and complicity and also the relationship between marginalisation/ authorisation.

The more complex analysis of masculinities offered by Connell and others (see Brittan, 1989; Hearn and Collinson, 1990; Morgan, 1992) began to appear in male researchers' studies of masculinities and schooling in the United Kingdom around the mid-1990s (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1994a, 1995a, 1995b; Parker, 1996). Feminist analyses of masculinities and schooling, which also had at their centre considerations of power, had an earlier history (Arnot, 1984; Askew & Ross, 1988; Heward, 1988).

Research studies, findings and suggested strategies for working with boys in school which locate themselves within this politicised approach seek to move away from universalist and essentialist forms of theorising gender relations yet retain ways of analysing power dynamics and processes. This work also aims to maintain the importance of psychic subjectivities in any analysis of masculinities whilst avoiding the 'identity therapy'

redolent of the 'men's rights' approach. Such a project has required recourse to both materialist and deconstructionist approaches.

A materialist analysis allows for conceptualisations of the interrelationships between agency and structure and enables an understanding of dominant and subordinate power relations in terms of social groups. It logically proceeds to argue that the nature of social beings can be 'read off' from institutional infrastructures. The implication is that identity is simply a reflection of the dynamics of an institution; so boys' and girls' identities at school are shaped solely as a result of the gendered practices of the school. This interpretation of how social identities are constructed leads to the conclusion that, in schools, all that is required is for pupils and teachers to recognise the 'false consciousness' shaping their behaviours and that will be sufficient to bring about change in gendered identities. What a materialist analysis cannot do is account for the multiple, complex and constantly shifting nature of power relations. To understand constructions of identities within schools there is a need to explore the simultaneous articulations of dispersed *and* localised shifting connections of social power (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1997). Here deconstructionist approaches are useful in that they enable a researcher to explore the simultaneous relationships between such analytic concepts as age, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, social class etc. Also, psychoanalysis, which cannot strictly be located within deconstructionism, lends itself to post-modernist/post-structuralist approaches in that it "illustrates the limits of over-rationalist accounts of sexual politics that fail to acknowledge that what we *feel* is as important as what we *know* in relation to the maintenance of dominant gender . . . practices" (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1995, p. 233). However, deconstructivist approaches to identity/subjectivity, like materialist

propositions, have their drawbacks notably in their inability to politicise power struggles.

It is evident in some of the writings on masculinities and schooling that many researchers have found it useful to retain the tensions between materialist, deconstructivist and psychoanalytic theories to analyse masculinities in educational settings (Connell, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Redman, 1996; Hallden, 1997). Indeed many of the current books and packs concerned with boys' attitudes and behaviours suggest activities which directly address their emotional and psychological experiences. Such material implies that it should be located in 'personal' ('men's rights'/conservative/spiritual) perspectives but when the debates and arguments around these emotional and psychological experiences are related to broader issues connected with social power then other theoretical positions are being drawn on (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996; McClean, 1997; also see work by feminists on masculinity, Arizpe & Arnot, 1997; Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997).

This section has outlined the various means by which masculinities have been theorised, and an indication has been provided of how the 'personal' and 'political' perspectives are manifest in recent materials and resources which are intended to tackle boys' underachievement at school. The following section considers the literature on boys/men teachers and schooling. Given the limited amount of available research into masculinities and primary schools, reference will be made where relevant to studies of secondary schools in order to discuss current knowledge and understandings of the field.

Studies of Boys and Schooling

The majority of sociological studies of primary schools have *not* explored or even discussed 'boys' as subjective beings (for exceptions see Thorne, 1993; Connolly, 1998a). Rather, the principal focus in much of the research has been on boys as *pupils;* that is, on one aspect of the 'whole' child (King, 1978; Pollard, 1985a; Clarricoates, 1987). This is not to decry the significance of these studies. Connell (1989) and Mac an Ghaill (1994) have pointed to the significance of the school environment as a site upon which boys and girls engage with constructions of gendered subjectivities. What deconstructionist approaches have revealed is that studies of gender and primary schooling have provided only partial accounts of children's gendered identities. This present study also provides a partial account of masculinity (see Chapter 2) but it is an account which is located within current theories of masculinities. So, in Connell's theory of masculinities it is possible to explore hegemonic masculinity at a number of levels, including the institutional level of the school, without making any claims that such research gives insights into the psychic and discursive influences on constructing individual masculine subjectivities. With this in mind, it is possible to outline the differing areas of concern evident in existing research which has considered the relationships between boys and schooling; that is, a school's *gender regime,* male peer group cultures and teacher relations.

Schools and Gender Regimes

It has already been said that, as yet, very little research has been conducted into masculinities and primary schooling in the UK (for exceptions see Connolly, 1994a, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a; Jordan, 1995; Redman, 1996; Renold, 1997; Warren, 1997). Existing sociological studies

of primary schools have not always considered gender relations, and those which have engaged with these issues have tended towards essentialist positions (Nash, 1973; Sharp & Green, 1975; Hartley, 1985; Pollard, 1985a). There is a substantial body of feminist literature which has explored gender and primary schooling; however, this too leans towards dichotomous categories constructed by the power of boys (Hough, 1985; Clarricoates, 1987; Skelton, 1989; Tutchell, 1990; Reay, 1991; Francis, 1997). Radical feminists have provided great insights into gender-power dynamics in the classroom, and were amongst the first to raise questions about how masculinity is constructed (Mahony, 1985; Lees, 1986). At the same time, their emphasis on power *between* males and females in educational settings failed to grasp the multiple and complex ways in which power is manifested. As a result, this body of work helped to generate a image of a 'typical boy' who was dominant, aggressive and defined in comparison to girls. An example of this can be seen in the work of Katherine Clarricoates:

> The girls condemned boys for being rough and aggressive whilst the boys condemned girls for appearing to be the 'good pupils' since it is through the display of reverse qualities of what girls do that boys gain and reward status. (1987, p. 199).

The stance adopted by radical feminists in their accounts of schooling has been criticised for its positioning of 'female as victim' and 'male as victimizer' (Measor & Sikes, 1992; Jones, 1993; Hey, 1997). Yet both sociological and feminist accounts of educational processes and practices share the view that schools are sites where male dominance is regulated, normalised and legitimated (Beynon, 1989; Skeggs, 1991a). A more useful

approach is to see the school as a site where multiple forms of masculinity and femininity are present, without losing sight of the influence a school has on constructing and maintaining different patterns of gender:

> The school as an institution is characterized at any given time by a particular *gender regime.* This may be defined as the pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labor within the institution. The gender regime is a state of play rather than a permanent condition.
> (Kessler *et al.*, 1985, p. 42).

Whilst writers on masculinities and schooling argue that schooling is probably not the key influence in the formation of masculine identities for most men (Walker, 1988; Connell, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994), there is agreement that they play an important part as sites "where people conform, deviate, challenge, participate and engage with state apparatuses" (Carlen *et al.*, 1992, p. 30). The spaces in schooling where 'masculinity making' appears most evident is through the authority patterns, curriculum and the indirect effects of streaming (Connell, 1989).

a) Authority Patterns

The authority patterns referred to by Connell (1989) are those centring around discipline; such as school uniform, class registers, school assemblies and different forms of punishment, all of which involve assessing pupils and shaping the pupil population into "what Foucault terms a coherent 'normative order'" (Wolpe, 1988, p. 23; Foucault, 1977). These authority patterns carry with them particular implications for

modes of masculinity (and femininity). For example, the school is an authority structure representative of the state and, as such, has powers to coerce pupils by compelling them to attend school and, once there, teachers telling them what to do (Connell, 1989). The concept of authority in primary schools has been associated with male teachers having responsibility for the high status areas of the curriculum (e.g. maths and science), occupying central roles in the school requiring decision making (head teacher, deputy headteacher), 'controlling' older pupils and generally maintaining discipline and punishment throughout the school (Byrne, 1978; Delamont, 1980; Askew & Ross, 1989; Evetts, 1990).

The element of force evident in much of the discipline of schools has been argued to reflect a particularly 'tough' form of masculinity (Willis, 1977; Beynon, 1989; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996). This research suggests that teachers tend to adopt the more authoritarian modes of discipline with male pupils who are not academically successful thus helping to create the 'macho' modes of masculinity identified in practically all studies of masculinities and schooling (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979; Walker, 1988; Connell, 1989; Stanley, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1995b). Their argument is that a violent discipline system, particularly one locked into an educational system of academic success or failure, invites competition in 'machismo'. However, the changes brought about through ERA and central government concern with upskilling the labour force has generated new forms of authority and disciplinary codes in secondary schools (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). These new forms of authority can be seen in the introduction of new educational technologies into the curriculum and increased and focused monitoring and assessment of pupils (e.g. through Records of Achievement, Standard Assessment Tasks). As a consequence, the range of masculinities in schools has increased:

> . . . the 'non-academic' male students, (-) were positioned by the school management as a major threat to the projected self-representation of a modern, successful school in the local market. Equally significant, the vocationalization of the curriculum was discussed in terms of instilling social discipline, for this sector of working-class students, that in the past had been provided by employment. (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, p. 44)

Mac an Ghaill's study was concerned with the range of masculinities produced in secondary schools partly as a result of a high status being accorded (some) vocational subjects, so it is clear that the findings are not directly transferable to primary schooling. However, changes in terms of the curriculum and monitoring and assessment have impacted upon the ways in which primary schools are structured and managed (Lee & Croll, 1995; Galton, Hargreaves & Comber, 1998). One of the intentions of this present study is to explore the influence of educational reforms on constructions of masculinities in the primary sector.

b) Curriculum

Reference is made in this chapter to the 'male grammar school' nature of the National Curriculum which, some commentators argued, was simply legislating in favour of the gender-biased curriculum already in operation (Kant, 1987; Burton & Weiner, 1990). There was a tendency in earlier feminist literature to assume that all boys had equal access to all the benefits of this 'malestream' education (Byrne, 1978; Whyld, 1983; Jones, 1985). However, as writers on black masculinities (amongst others) have observed, the Eurocentric/middle-class nature of the National Curriculum places limitations on which groups can readily access and benefit from

education (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Parry, 1996; Sewell, 1997). As was argued in the above section, the vocationalisation of the curriculum in secondary schools has made more complex the dichotomy between academic subject knowledge versus vocational training (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). In this debate between academic expertise versus vocational training the content of the curriculum was seen as centring around the "dry sciences of academic abstraction" (Connell, 1989, p. 298) which related to a particular, class-specific version of masculinity being legitimated. These 'dry sciences' served two functions:

> The dry sciences are connected on the one hand to administration, whose importance is obvious in a world of enormous state apparatuses and multinational corporations. On the other hand they are connected to professionalism, which is a synthesis of knowledge, power and economic privilege central to both the application of developing technologies and the social administration of modern mass populations. (Connell, 1989, p. 298)

Christine Heward (1988), in her study of a private boys' school, agrees that the curriculum of elitist schools was framed around a specific, social class version of masculinity, but adds that this was not simply a case of reproducing elitist classes, as boys from a range of backgrounds attended the school. However, the fact that not all boys at the school could successfully access the benefits of the curriculum illustrates the point made in many studies of schooling that, as important as the *content* of the curriculum is, the way in which pupils are *organised* in relation to it is equally, if not more, important. In effect, the division in the curriculum between academic subject knowledge and vocational training was the

means by which the school system delivered social power; that is, access to higher education and entry to professional careers was restricted to those boys who were academic successes. By institutionalising academic success and failure through examinations and streaming the school forced divisions between boys (and girls) thereby enabling the construction of different modes of masculinity. This feature was first discussed in studies of boys' schooling by Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970).

c) Indirect Effects of Streaming

Lacey (1970) used the concept of 'differentiation-polarization' to identify the processes of pro- and anti-school cultures. A defining feature of these cultures was the way in which boys were positioned, mainly by teachers, in relation to the academic curriculum in terms of behaviour, attitudes and abilities (differentiation). Largely as a result of this differentiation, sub-cultures developed which stood in relation to the academic curriculum, with those boys who were doing badly academically likely to criticise, reject or sabotage the system (polarisation). So, for those boys who were at the extreme of polarisation, status could be achieved amongst their peers by adopting such behaviours as being 'cheeky' to teachers, playing truant, smoking, drinking and not doing homework.

Male Peer Group Cultures and Schooling

Following the innovatory work by Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970) research into the relationship between peer group cultures and schooling (particularly secondary schooling) has been extensive (Parker, 1974; Lambert, 1976; Fuller, 1980; Ball, 1981; Davies, 1984; Measor & Woods, 1984; Griffin, 1985; Pollard, 1985a; Abraham, 1989; Stanley, 1989; Troyna & Hatcher, 1992; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1998a). There is some agreement between the authors of this research specifically that peer

group cultures develop as "attempts to resolve collectively experienced problems arising from the contradictions in the social structure, and that they generate a form of collective identity from which an individual identity can be achieved" (Brake, 1980, p. 36). As Christine Heward (1991) has shown of public school boys, male identities "were forged in peer groups with the immediate end of surviving in the competition . . . for friendship, influence and power" (p.7). The significance of the interplay between male peer group cultures and school organization is indeed recognised in the vast majority of investigations of masculinities and secondary schooling (for example, Connell, *et al.*, 1982; Walker, 1988; Abraham, 1989).

Research into boys' peer group cultures at secondary school suggests that these are defined by their relationship to the academic hierarchy which has traditionally meant academic/high status versus vocational/low status (Willis, 1977; Connell, 1989). Mac an Ghaill (1994) has pointed to further complexities generated by the vocationalization of the curriculum in secondary schools which has developed new internal hierarchies between high and low status vocational subjects resulting in the redefining of school 'success' and 'failure'. What these studies make clear is that those boys who cannot access social power through academic success pursue alternative sources through claims to sporting abilities, physical aggression and sexual prowess. At the same time, these various competing masculinities do not occupy equal status but are organised hierarchically in relation to the form of hegemonic masculinity prevailing in the school:

> As schools create the conditions for a hegemonic masculinity, differing meanings of masculinity will compete

for ascendancy. The curriculum offers male students a resource to develop their masculinity, through a range of responses to it. At the same time, relations of domination and subordination become apparent, as some groups are able to define their meaning of masculinity over others. These definitions create boundaries which serve to delineate what appropriate maleness should be within this social arena. Transgression of these boundaries activates techniques of normalization, ranging from labelling through to physical violence, that ultimately act to maintain differences embedded in the ascendant definitions of masculinity. (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996, p. 55)

There are three issues here which emerge from the research into secondary school organization and male peer group networks which have relevance for male peer group cultures and primary schooling. Firstly, as was argued earlier in this chapter, research studies of primary age boys have tended to focus on boys' groups, comparing them to those of girls. These studies have noted that boys tend to interact in larger groups, engage in more aggressive and competitive play, and often organise their activities around sports (Lever, 1978; Fine 1987; Adler, Kless & Adler, 1992). Unlike studies of masculinities and secondary schools there has been less attempt at exploring the interplay between male peer groups and school organization. Although the studies by Pollard (1985a) and Clarricoates (1987) use gender as a distinctive feature of their explorations of children's cultures at school, neither considers how boys and girls construct and contest masculinities and femininities in relation to school processes. However, these studies, together with more recent research by Jordan (1995) and Connolly (1994a, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a), point either

implicitly or explicitly to the authority structures of primary schools as integral to the construction of masculine identities. For example, Ellen Jordan (1995) suggests that the development of school resistant masculinities is partly a result of the contrasting demands of being a 'boy' and being a conformist pupil. The latter is expected to speak quietly, not seek attention or use domineering behaviour, not to express anger or impatience and to avoid body contact whilst the opposite is expected of 'real' boys (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). In a different way Paul Connolly's (1995a) study has shown how teachers' control/management strategies drew on discourses of *'race'*, *'childhood'* and *'school-pupil'* and noted the contributory effects of these on the construction of masculine identities amongst a group of infant African/Caribbean boys:

> It created the self-fulfilling prophecy where the Bad Boys were forced into more fights and were then identified and publicly vilified by the teacher for being more aggressive (-). The boys were then set up with an even stronger 'masculine' identity which other boys within the school felt it necessary to challenge. (p. 177)

A second issue arising from the research into masculinities and secondary schooling is that primary schools are not involved with the vocationalization of the curriculum so the range of masculinities is unlikely to be as great as those found in secondary schools. The third issue is, when research into boys' peer group cultures and secondary schooling identified links between various modes of masculinity and academic success or failure there were substantial differences between the primary and secondary sectors. Secondary education at the time of the research by Hargreaves, Lacey, Ball etc. was concerned with pupils

securing academic achievement and access to higher education and careers. Primary education, prior to the ERA 1988, was framed around child-centred ideas of learning (Alexander, 1984; Marriott, 1985) where competitive testing and assessment of pupils did not have a place. However, the introduction of Standard Assessment Tasks and the publication of primary league tables (with or without 'value added') has reinvoked the institutionalization of academic failure via competitive grading and streaming not seen since the days of the eleven plus examination.

This section has provided an overview of the literature on masculinities and schooling. It has been shown that there are two key areas which have occupied the concerns of researchers, namely the *gender regimes* of schools, and male peer group cultures. The third section considers another area of central importance to the cultural production of masculine positions; that is, the masculine styles of the teachers (Kessler *et al.*, 1985; Phillips, 1993; Mac an Ghaill, 1996b). The following section will consider the available information on men teachers and masculinities.

Men, Masculinities and Teaching

Kessler *et al.* (1985) have argued "men teachers have a particular responsibility and opportunity (-) because what they say and do influences what kind of masculinity is hegemonic in the school" (p. 38). However, as Acker (1995) points out in her extensive review of the literature on teachers' work, the influence of gender has been minimized, even in studies of primary school teachers. She goes on to add "there is a small literature making problematic gender issues for those men who teach in elementary schools" (p. 106). A central finding of this review is

that, for the most part, the literature on teachers' work treats gender as peripheral *or* central to the analysis. With few exceptions (Acker cites just two; Altenbaugh, 1992 and Connell, 1985) 'mainstream' investigations of teachers and teaching fail to integrate gender into the analysis. Also, despite the contribution of postmodernism/poststructuralism in terms of providing a means through which *difference* can be explored, the diversity amongst men (and women) teachers has yet to be taken into account. Abbott (1993) has observed that although there are studies that compare the sexes, and many studies that examine differences among subgroups of women, "varieties of women are (never) compared to varieties of men" (p. 197). He goes onto say "The antinomy between the simple male-female opposite and the diversity of women when considered alone is the basic conundrum of this literature, indeed, of the gender and work literature as a whole" (p. 197). What this means is that there is a substantial amount of information about men teachers yet very little about the masculinities of men teachers.

Men Teachers in Primary Schools

Recently government officials have claimed that the lack of male teachers in primary schools is responsible for teaching being perceived as a low status profession and is a major contributory factor in boys' underachievement (Millett, 1995; Byers, 1998). Whilst such views are clearly open to question, it is accurate to say that men teachers in primary schools are outnumbered by women by a ratio of 1:4 (DfEE, 1996). At the same time, they continue to occupy a disproportionate number of head and deputy headteacher positions. The situation has changed little since the 1980s with approximately one in three men primary teachers occupying a headteacher position whilst the comparable statistic for female primary teachers is one in thirteen. There is also evidence to show

clear links between senior management posts, maths and/or science subject specialisms and the teaching of the eldest primary pupils with men teachers (Alexander, 1991; Thornton, 1996). Feminist research has revealed that there are historical and cultural reasons for this situation (Widdowson, 1983; De Lyon & Migniuolo, 1989).

Primary teaching has traditionally been a female occupation due to its comparatively low status and low pay. The majority of primary teachers at the turn of the century were working-class females recruited to the job via the pupil-teacher scheme. When that scheme ended in 1914 the composition of the primary teaching force remained predominantly female with more middle class girls entering the profession. Training teachers was inexpensive, and whilst many middle class parents were not prepared to invest large amounts of money educating their daughters, they were willing to invest a moderate sum which would allow these girls to earn a small wage prior to marriage (Widdowson, 1983). In contrast, those boys who undertook some form of teacher training were drawn mainly from the lower working classes. Although the pay offered by teaching was not seen as sufficient for the needs of middle-class males, it was on a par with the wages a working-class man might earn. These differences in the social class backgrounds of men and women teachers were seen by one teacher union as detrimental to the teaching profession. The National Association of Schoolmasters argued for the continuation of differential pay levels on the basis that a higher wage was needed to recruit better educated men:

> The NAS argued that relatively low rates of pay in teaching would attract only 'the unambitious man of low mental power and low attainment . . . content with the narrow limits

of his chosen trade' (*Equal Pay, 1921).* This meant that the education of boys would be of a lesser quality than that of girls, as they 'have not only an inferior type of teacher but (these) teachers (have) to work under greater mental stress and consequently lessened resiliency of mind' (*New Schoolmaster* (NS), 1922). (Littlewood, 1995, p. 48)

This idea that men teachers were inferior to other men was exacerbated by the mental-manual divide with 'men's work' being located in the latter category (Willis, 1977; Delamont, 1980). To a large extent this cultural legacy has continued into the present day. Teaching is not perceived as 'masculine' because it involves emotional engagement and caring for children (Connell, 1985) and those men who do enter primary teaching may have doubts cast on their 'maleness' (Aspinwall & Drummond, 1989; Allan, 1993).

Masculinities and Men Teachers

As yet, only a small amount of literature exists which explores the problematic nature of masculinity for men who work with primary and nursery children (Seifert, 1988; Sheppard, 1989; Skelton, 1991; Allan, 1993; Cameron, 1997). Some of the literature on masculinities and secondary school teachers offers opportunities for comparisons and differences between how men in the two sectors of education might construct and negotiate masculine identities. For example, in their consideration of masculinities and secondary teachers, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill (1996) note there are two interlinked areas that demonstrate the ways in which teachers' masculinities are produced. The first is concerned with teacher ideologies and their relationship to the labour process, and the second involves the use of discipline in teaching styles.

Teaching has changed substantially over recent years, with greater emphasis placed on specialisation. At the same time, there has been a de-skilling of the job represented by a move away from liberal-humanist constructions of teaching towards technicist approaches. This has had implications for the way in which masculinities are worked out. Mac an Ghaill's (1994) study identifies three groups of male teachers whose masculine identities were shaped by their different responses to educational reforms: 'Professionals', 'Collectivists' and 'New Entrepreneurs'. The 'Professionals' manifested a masculine style that revolved around discipline and control; the 'Collectivists' drew on masculine forms that supported equality in terms of anti-racist and anti-sexist stances; and the 'New Entrepreneurs' supported conventional forms of masculinity centring on upward mobility achieved through processes of appraisal, accountability and effective management. The particular form of masculinity demonstrated by the 'Professionals' links to the second area where teachers' masculinities are reinforced, specifically through their legitimation of different teaching styles.

As Brittan (1989) has argued, masculinities have to operate, or be competent at operating, some degree of power and authority. Thus, male teachers' identities, ideologies and pedagogical styles are constructed around certain modes of masculinities which are intended to demonstrate what kind of men they are (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996) and, in terms of teaching, that means making explicit forms of discipline and control (Beynon, 1989). This issue of discipline was, and continues to be, of significance for male teachers in the primary school. If teaching generally is seen as a 'soft option' in the list of male occupations (Connell, 1985), and primary education in particular is related to femininity, then male teachers in this sector are aware of others' attention to their maleness

(Thornton, 1997). Studies have shown that for men working with young children this results in continual negotiation of their masculine identities (Skelton, 1991; Allan, 1993; Penn, 1996):

> They must assert - and especially model - "being a real man" in ways that are personally sustainable, that have integrity, and that are also acceptable to those who evaluate them on this important job criterion and control their careers. At the same time, they feel pressure to conform to stereotypically feminine qualities to establish the sensitive, caring relationships necessary to effectively teach children. For these men, gender is highly problematized, and they must negotiate the meaning of masculinity every day. (Allan, 1993, p. 114).

One way of handling these contradictions is for men to emphasise those aspects of teaching that are more compatible with conventional masculinity (Connell, 1985). This may partly explain why men primary teachers are concentrated in the upper years of primary school where they have responsibility for the management and control of the oldest pupils and occupy senior management positions. It also adds weight to those findings which show that male teachers identify with exaggerated forms of masculinity amongst boys in secondary school schools such as the sexual prowess of the 'Lads' (Willis, 1977) whilst rejecting other forms, labelling them as effeminate, as with the anti-sports, anti-violence 'Goths' (Abraham, 1989). In primary schools men teachers have been shown to place great emphasis on and demonstrate deep commitment to shared masculine activities particularly football (Connolly, 1994a).

This section has shown that, as yet, there is very little available information about how men teachers construct and negotiate their masculine identities in school settings or how their subjective identities relate to the hegemonic masculinity of the school. It would seem from the literature which is available that men primary teachers, particularly those working with the younger age groups, have to resolve contradictory positionings of the 'mumsy' discourse of primary teaching (Burgess & Carter, 1992) and those involved in being a 'real man' in a 'man's job' (Williams, 1993).

Conclusion

This review of the literature on masculinities and schooling has focused on three main areas. Firstly it has considered how masculinities have been, and are, theorised and how the 'personal' and 'political' perspectives have informed materials and resources aimed at tackling boys' underachievement at school. Secondly, it has shown that discussions on boys and schooling have tended to revolve around considerations of the *gender regime* of a school and/or male peer group cultures. Although not discussed in any detail here, feminist research has concentrated on boys as the 'other' in order to illuminate the different and unequal experiences of girls. The third area discussed in this chapter is that of masculinities and men teachers and a exploration of the literature has revealed that this is an area which requires investigation given the existing lack of information.

Although ways of theorising masculinities have been developed in recent years the concept itself, as Jeff Hearn (1996) points out, continues to be used in imprecise ways. In order to avoid any possibility of obscuring the power of men's material practices through a search for the existence of

masculinity/masculinities, then it might be useful to adopt alternative terminology. For example, the findings which point to the curriculum, authority patterns and streaming practices of the school as 'masculinity making' spaces might be more appropriately spoken of as areas in which the material discursive practices of, and about, men are generated. Similarly, the inter- and intra-relationships of various male peer groups in the secondary school setting might be more aptly discussed in terms of men's social relations rather than masculinities.

An attention to greater precision of the use of the term 'masculinities' in existing studies illustrates an apparent absence in the literature. In talking about the spaces where masculinity-making appears most explicit and abundant avoids the material discursive practices of individual schools in relation to immediate circumstances. Both Les Back (1993) and Paul Connolly (1994b) talk about the need for researchers to look outside the school gates; to consider how the gender/'race'/social class relations in the local community impact upon the hegemonic masculinity of the school. The studies referred to earlier suggest greater emphasis is now being given to how boys construct masculine identities in school settings with apparently less concern with the impact of educational policies and physical location on the gender regimes or hegemonic masculinity of individual schools (for exceptions see Heward, 1988; Back, 1994; Connolly, 1998a).

The focus in the two case study schools in this present study is on the hegemonic masculinity of each specific establishment and consideration given to how each form of hegemony was constructed through its relationship to broader educational initiatives and its immediate position in the local culture and community. The investigation also considered the

ways in which the boys engaged with and constructed, negotiated and re-constructed dominant modes of masculinities in the school site. As such the discussion in the case study chapters draws on both the material and discursive practices available to the boys in the different schools. The following chapter will provide an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings used in the study to explore hegemonic masculinity in the primary classroom.

SECTION 2

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 2

'STUDYING UP' AND FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY

The review of the literature in the previous chapter has shown that gender has been, and is, a significant variable in schooling at all levels from classroom practices through to policy and in the ways in which academics have researched and theorised about education. All those who have written about gender agree that it has, and continues to be, an important organising principle in education. However, as will be discussed later, it is evident that there are major differences in the ways in which researchers have investigated and drawn conclusions about 'boys' and 'girls' experiences of schooling. Although, taken together, alternate and various points of departure in theorising gender and schooling demonstrate the complex and multifarious relationships which exist (in terms of interconnections and influences of the state and other social structures, social class, 'race', family, identity construction etc.), it is not always clear *how* specific conclusions have been arrived at. The position of the researcher is presented as 'objective onlooker' thereby masking the experiences, understandings, motivations and attitudes which have been brought to bear on the research processes. This has been as much of an issue in feminism as in the traditional disciplines despite the fact that *feminist* researchers, by definition, identify themselves as holding particular views.

Illustrations of the ways in which researchers present findings as 'truisms' can be found in the work of feminists who carried out studies of educational inequalities in the 1970s and 1980s, when a concern with

methodology was less of an issue. For example, feminists exploring sexual harassment in schools have argued that "girls are seen primarily in terms of their sexual reputation rather than their human qualities, personality or attributes" (Lees, 1986, p. 53); and that, in schools, a "message (is) being transmitted to all pupils. This is that the sexual assault of girls by boys does not constitute a serious matter" (Mahony, 1989, p. 161). The absence in these studies of sexual harassment in schools or any discussion about the mechanisms through which these insights (knowledge) have been made prompted questions regarding how realistic or appropriate it is to portray male power as universal, holistic and impervious to other locations of power such as social class and 'race' (Measor & Sikes, 1992, Whelehan, 1995).

However, more recent discussions about methodology have pointed to the inevitable partiality of any research account, and argued that in order to engage with the knowledge/findings of any research it is necessary to understand *how* that knowledge/findings were produced (Harding, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Skeggs, 1995; Connolly, 1997; Edwards & Ribbens, 1998). The *how* referred to here is more than a request to have greater clarification of how a researcher analyses, validates and generalises their data, but refers to a recognition that all knowledge is situated (Skeggs, 1994; Stanley, 1997; Alldred, 1998). To explain this idea further, it is argued here that researchers 'identify' their position in their written accounts of their investigations through the language they use and the ways their ideas are presented. For example, in the general discussion of the previous chapters I have used the terms *'discourse', 'others', 'difference'* and *'deconstructionist'* in one breath and *'materialist'* and *'hegemonic'* in the next in a seemingly unproblematic way as if they stem from complementary rather than contradictory standpoints. The use of these

terms indicates the theoretical positions on which I am drawing and, as such, are pivotal to the inception, development and writing up of this research. Liz Stanley (1997) explains the implications of the positions researchers adopt by saying:

> . . . the use of particular kinds of reference group is taken to indicate very different points of view, and from these other things are seen to follow: including what political or ethical problems are accorded greatest significance, and how these are perceived, analysed and understood, as well as what strategies are proposed . . . different knowledges about the 'same' thing are possible, and also that knowledge is specific because grounded in the 'point of view' of those producing it . . . knowledge is a *material* product of particular kinds of social systems . . . knowledge (is) something which is specific to time and place and person, and so (-) is contextual, grounded and material, as well as being rooted in the 'point of view' of particular knowledge-producers who share these ideas with a group of other people who think similarly . . . (p. 204)

The intention of this chapter is to make explicit the research and theorising upon which the final product of this study rests. The purpose of undertaking this activity is to explicate the *processes* of production in order to locate and situate the knowledge produced and my role in this. The framework adopted to carry this out is one formulated by Beverley Skeggs (1995) to enable feminist researchers to focus on their methodologies. She formulated five categories of questions These are:

- why was the area of study chosen, what institutional, economic and socio-political factors underpinned the choice?

- which frameworks of established knowledge were used, referred to, challenged, ignored and why?

- which methods were chosen for study and why? Why were other approaches not used?

- how did the initial questions and research relate to the final product?

- how did the process of writing influence the final product?

This chapter will, then, provide the theoretical framework for the case study chapters which are to follow. In the sense that discussion of the methodology is to be linked inextricably with the underlying theoretical positions, the 'presentation' moves away from the more conventional form of what is usually entailed in a 'Methodology' chapter. The following chapter (three) will set out the progression of the research by considering such aspects as research sites and samples, gaining access, relationships in the field etc. What follows here is an attempt to explicate methodology/theory under the headings of, motivations for the research, situating the research and, developing a theoretical model.

Motivations for the Research

The interest in exploring relationships between boys/men teachers and primary schooling arose from several interconnected sources. A long term commitment to feminism was one, together with a burgeoning interest in what could be discovered about how, individually and collectively, male practices in primary school sites 'worked'. At the end of the 1980s I carried out a local case study of the career perspectives and motivations of men teachers who worked with young children. This investigation had been prompted by an unexpected and unusual influx of men students onto the early years Post-Graduate Certificate in Education course (PGCE) at the university where I work. An important issue emerging from this research was the question of men teachers having physical contact with young children. Shortly after this research had ended, a number of local cases involving the sexual abuse of children by primary and nursery men teachers became public (Skelton, 1998b). Most disturbing was that at the centre of one of the child sexual abuse incidents was a teacher who had taken part in my research and who had talked at length about his involvement with Kidscape. It appeared that he had used the Kidscape guidelines in order to teach the children "that a hug is a hug and they should know the difference between a nice hug that they like and hugs they don't like" (quoted in Skelton, 1994, p. 90) to initiate physical contact with children in his reception class. Three issues came out of this research into the career perspectives of men teachers of young children and the revelations of the sexual abuse of primary pupils which prompted and shaped the focus on 'maleness' and primary schooling.

The first point was that, on an individual basis, being born male did not mean that one was destined to practice destructive behaviours and, for

those men who did, it could not be assumed they would only exploit females. The men primary/nursery teachers who were charged and found guilty of sexual abuse assaulted boys as well as girls and there is now substantial evidence of the extent to which some men sexually abuse other men as well as, or instead of, women (McMullen, 1990; Mezey & King, 1992; Gillespie, 1996). In accepting that not all men were abusers and that males too were victims of abuse meant questioning my own framework for understanding male power. Although my feminist beliefs could not be neatly categorised into any one perspective, the investigations and analysis I had undertaken on gender relations had always leaned towards radical feminism (Skelton, 1989, 1991, 1994; Skelton & Hanson, 1989; Skeggs & Skelton, 1991). As was implied in the earlier examples of analyses of sexual harassment, radical feminists have argued that *all* men have the capacity for violence (Dworkin, 1981; Mackinnon, 1988). Yet unproblematically adopting this principle for analysis did not account for the lived experiences of myself and other feminists who have acknowledged coming from families and being friends with men who did not engage with aggression, not through dint of self-control but simply because they did not have violent personalities (Miedzian, 1992; Miles, 1992).

The second point to arise was the realisation that primary schools are not safe places. Existing research into primary schools had clearly identified the gender-power dynamics between boys and girls and some studies have hinted at those between boys and boys, and girls and girls (Pollard, 1985a; Clarricoates, 1987; Grugeon, 1993). Some accounts have demonstrated the negative and destructive behaviours some boys exert over girls in the struggle to secure their dominant power position (Hough, 1985; Browne & Ross, 1991; Francis, 1997). In addition, and more

significantly, is the authority/power of the teacher. Teachers have authority over their pupils in many areas including their behaviour, dress, speech, as well as having control over children's time and physical space (Delamont, 1983; Hammersley, 1990). As Pollard (1985a) has argued, the greatest potential threat to children being able to cope in school has to do with the power of the teacher and, although carried out in secondary schools, some studies have shown how teachers adopt strategies which undermine and humiliate their pupils (Woods, 1979; Furlong, 1985; Beynon, 1989).

The third point which intersected the previous two was the relationship between broader social structures and ideologies to individuals in the classroom. This can be explained by returning again to the cases of men primary/nursery teachers who were found guilty of sexually abusing their pupils. One argument as to why this occurred can be found in psychological explanations of sexual abuse. Traditionally, child sexual abuse has been discussed within a 'disease model' (Parton, 1990) where the emphasis has been on individual identification, prevention and treatment. In this definition, child sexual abuse is located within individual pathology, where the roots lie in the personality or character of the abuser. According to this argument, the men teachers who had abused their pupils were aware of their personal predilections and had sought jobs which would allow them access to vulnerable youngsters. An alternative understanding is that child sexual abuse needs to be explored within a political framework (Violence Against Children Study Group, 1990; Parton *et al.*, 1997). This is where consideration is given to the social context in which sexual abuse arises; specifically, that the roots of child abuse lie in the construction of masculinity (Hearn, 1988). Thus, an explanation of the causes of the men teachers' sexual abuse of their pupils

would be located in wider ideological constructions of masculinity but would also need to take into account the ways in which various masculinities were constructed within the school settings.

Taken together, these three points indicated the lack of published information into how male practices, individually and collectively, were enacted in primary schools and their relationships to wider social structures. It has since emerged that at the time I was formulating the area of investigation (the beginning of the 1990s) others were thinking along similar lines (Connolly, 1994a, 1995a,b,c, 1997; Redman, 1996; Renold, 1997; Francis, 1998). The *reason* for wanting to find out about how maleness was 'worked out' in primary schools was mainly due to my feminism and the desire to seek out information which might contribute to strategies aimed at off-setting the destructive effects of boys'/men's aggressive or violent behaviours towards girls as well as each other. As Skeggs (1995) has said of feminist research:

> As feminists we are involved in continually theorising the situations and locations of ourselves and others, we are already implicated before we begin research. At the same time, the research we do is not just a matter of where we come from and where we are located but also where we look to. Our work is motivated by our political aspirations. Behind each contribution stands a desire for change. (p. 12)

Although I was always clear as to *why* I wanted to explore boys/men in the primary school, identifying *what* to focus on and *how* to frame the research evolved as I entered into the preliminary stages of the research with the case study schools.

Situating the Research

At the start of the data collection period I did not have clearly defined research questions. A reading of the literature on masculinities and secondary schooling had taught me to be wary of making assumptions about 'school boys', not least because of differences in age. As Phillips (1993) has argued, the behaviour and attitudes of five and twelve year old boys are different and need to be considered and addressed differently. So the loose description of the research I provided to the two schools in which the data was collected was that it intended to "explore how boys live out their 'maleness' in primary schools". In hindsight I appreciate how my long established professional relationships with members of staff in the two schools must have facilitated access. I cannot envisage a situation whereby a school would allow an unknown researcher to have access to its documentation, pupils and staff based on such a woolly and unformulated proposal!

A substantial amount of time was spent in both schools before an intense period of data gathering began. Fieldnotes were kept in accordance with conventional ethnographic techniques. The key function of this proved not as I thought, to begin to identify main themes, but acted as a device to allow a questioning of what could be *knowable* in the particular circumstances. These questions centred around the decision to conduct ethnographic case studies, and the location of the researcher to the researched.

Ethnography as Theory

Using ethnographic techniques to explore primary schooling is now well established in educational research (Sharp & Green, 1975; King, 1978;

Pollard, 1985a, 1985b; Clarricoates, 1987; Thorne, 1993). Also, the qualitative strategies associated with ethnography are those used in the overwhelming majority of feminist (and pro-feminist) studies of gender relations in schools (Stanworth, 1981; Wood, 1987; Wolpe, 1988; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1995a; Francis, 1998). What unites these studies is a shared idea about how research should be carried out; that is, they all: provide some account of the context; take place over a substantial period of time; involve the researcher participating and observing; offer an account of the development of the relationships between the researcher and the researched; explicate a studying of the 'other'; regard participants as microcosms of wider structural processes. So, ethnography, as described here, is a *theory* of the research process. However, ethnography is also defined by its relationship to theoretical perspectives. For example, Sharp & Green's (1975) analysis is informed by Marxist theory and Pollard's (1985a) by symbolic interactionism.

The theoretical positions adopted by researchers in their ethnographies of primary schools are not always so clear (for example, Thorne, 1993) and it is often easier to understand differences between the perspectives of ethnographers by considering the assumptions which underpin how they approach the research. These differences have been categorised as naturalist, modernist, realist, social constructionist and post-modernist ethnographies (Marcus, 1992; Skeggs, 1995) with the proviso that, in practice, it is difficult to strictly apply these definitions as they overlap. This difficulty is exemplified in Barrie Thorne's exploration of gender relations in elementary schools in the USA, where she draws on *modernist* approaches (a focus on the complex formation of identity across a range of sites in relation to wider global issues), *social constructionist* beliefs (the power of researcher's questions and the use of representation to construct

the lives of the people they are studying), and, to an extent, *post-modernist* ideology (privileging of discourses). The theoretical positions I brought to the research will be made clearer as this chapter unfolds but it can be said here that the commitment to feminism and feminist ways of thinking provided the motivation for, and justification to, traverse various belief systems. Skeggs (1995), reflecting on her own approach to methodology/theory, remarked that a "refusal to (be) contained by knowledge categories (-) leads to the breaking down of the myth of epistemological and methodological purity so essential to the maintenance of disciplinary boundaries which have for so long restricted feminist scholarship" (p. 11). (See also Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1997 for a similar position).

The idea that the research process itself could and should be open to interrogation encouraged more clearly defined research questions. Accepting the significance of opening up the processes by which researchers devise and develop their projects enabled me to engage more closely with the unease I was experiencing regarding how to explain my personal commitment to feminism in relation to the research focus on males. Integral to feminist research and, more recently, to those carrying out studies of children in school is the notion of giving a 'voice' to the subjects of research (Hatcher, 1994; Pollard, Thiessen & Filer, 1997). However, it seemed to me there were a number of barriers (a combination of differences in age, gender, status, perspective, experiences) which precluded me being able to undertake any research which could accurately claim to have provided a 'voice' for the boys. To provide a 'voice' would have entailed some insights into and understandings of their masculine subjective identities and so, for reasons discussed later, I made the decision not to pretend that the research could provide definitive

explanations of masculinities in primary school settings. Rather, the school itself was used as the lens through which data about constructions of masculinities and male practices were collected. The research questions were then:

- What part does the primary school play in constructing, challenging and re-constructing forms of masculinities and male practices?

- If schools are sites where multiple modes of masculinities are constructed, negotiated, challenged and re-constructed what do these 'look like' in terms of male actions, behaviours and attitudes in the primary classroom?

Locating the Researcher

The role I occupied in both schools was that of part-time teacher/researcher (the reasons for this are explained in Chapter 3). Initially I was disturbed about having to undertake the research wearing the label of 'teacher' as the intention had been to be an 'adult helper' in the classroom. The purpose of situating myself as 'adult helper' was that I wanted to minimise, wherever possible, the number of different power relationships I would have with the boys, girls, teachers and other adults in the school. On reflection this seems rather a naive intention; relationships in the field are established on the basis of not who the researcher 'pretends' to be but rather on the constant construction and negotiation of personal identity. Some researchers have adopted rather novel approaches to undertaking studies of primary school children such as King (1978) attempting to disguise himself (a six foot man) by sitting in

the 'Wendy House' and ignoring the children if they spoke to him and, more recently, Holmes' (1995) efforts with kindergarten children to transform their perceptions of her as an adult woman and, instead, to become and be seen as 'one of them'. As Connolly (1997) has pointed out, Holmes seemed unaware that adopting this guise did not simultaneously allow her to overcome the way in which her subjectivity constructed, informed and theorised her relationships with the children.

It has been argued that, as researchers, we are located and positioned in many different ways but, at the same time, we also locate and position ourselves although this is always defined by one's history, nature, age, gender, 'race', sexuality, social class etc. (Harding, 1991; Skeggs, 1994; Stanley, 1997; Alldred, 1998). Thus, to take on a role as adult-helper/researcher in a classroom was unlikely to have prevented me, for example, drawing on the understandings I have about teaching and learning or managing and organising children in the classroom.

A separate matter was the extent to which I, as an adult woman, could access information about the ways in which young boys constructed and negotiated their masculine identities. As was mentioned earlier, a further consideration was the ongoing discomfort of focusing the research questions on boys/men in primary schools given that one popular definition of feminist research was that its characteristics are *on*, *by* and *for* women (Stanley & Wise, 1979; Roberts, 1981; Duelli Klein, 1983). By the mid-1990s this notion of feminist research had been largely set aside (Kelly, Burton & Regan, 1994; Stanko, 1994) mainly as a result of persuasive arguments put forward by feminists in law, criminology and social work, for example:

> The latent effect of seeing feminist research as exclusively about women's lives is that it allows things male to go uninvestigated, almost as though the idea of the male-as-norm were not being questioned anymore. However, we must demystify power and its components, one of which is the production of 'masculinity' and 'masculine' behaviour. (Layland, 1990, p. 129).

These difficulties were, to a large extent, resolved by acknowledging that whatever data I could collect about how masculinities were constructed by boys/men in primary schools could only ever be seen as one part of a much bigger project. Subjectivity is constructed across a range of sites and even if I could have accessed the kinds of information about how masculinity is constructed in relation to other masculinities (as men researchers have been able to; see Walker, 1988; Connell, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1995b) this would still not have provided information about boys' positionings within other discourses such as son, friend, child etc. It was the issue of accessing masculine subjectivities together with my feminist 'sensitivities' and the fact that the schools had determined my role as that of part-time teacher/researcher that established the focus of the research as one which used the *schools'* constructions of modes of masculinities in order to explore how boys engaged with, challenged, negotiated, rejected and re-constructed their masculine selves in school settings.

Developing a Theoretical Model

At the centre of the research was the issue of male power. The political will underpinning the research was to gain insights into how boys engage

with male power in the forms it takes in primary schools in order to add to feminist understandings:

> Whilst studying the construction of masculinity is of key importance, what needs to be explored is not so much how men 'experience' this, or explicating different 'masculinities', but, (-) the connections between the construction and practice of masculinity and women's (and children's) oppression. (Kelly, Burton & Regan, 1994, p. 34)

This phenomenon was to be investigated from the position of the school as a part-time teacher through school documentation, observation and interviews so a further consideration was how the data would be used to build theory.

A much debated issue in educational research is that of theory building (Woods, 1985; Shilling, 1992; Skeggs, 1992; Abraham, 1994; Hammersley, 1995). Hammersley (1992), for example, has argued that ethnographic research in education has been largely descriptive and weak in terms of the generation and formulation of theory (for discussion of generalisability see Chapter 3 and Chapter 9). In an earlier article he (together with Scarth & Webb, 1985) wrote that theory occupied a problematic place within ethnography, partly as a result of a reaction to what were seen as over-deterministic sociological approaches, and partly a desire to privilege participants' own accounts. As a majority of ethnographic studies of primary schools and feminist explorations of gender relations in primary schooling have used 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to generate explanations, my research will be outlined in relation to this concept.

It has to be noted that many of the studies which claim to have generated theory from the data have adopted a rather 'loose' interpretation of grounded theory. As Bryman & Burgess (1994) have suggested, "it is probably given lip-service to a greater degree than is appreciated" (p. 6). Despite its popularity, a number of criticisms have been made about the status of theory in 'grounded theory' and its relationship to data (Burgess, 1984); for example, Williams (1976) points out that the term 'theory' is often used when discussing what are actually properties, categories and hypotheses. Layder (1993) has argued that theories should be elaborate "rather than ones that narrowly specify the relations between measurable variables" (p. 15). What he is suggesting is that theories should be able to account for:

> . . . the nature of the links between the seemingly more remote and abstract forms of theorizing (-) and the actual practice of research and the formulation of research projects. (Layder, 1993, p. 15).

Layder criticises the idea that macro/structural elements can be brought into 'grounded theory' on the basis that its claims rest on the emergent nature of meaning and that it should 'fit' and be relevant to the people to whom it refers (p. 54). The point that 'grounded theory' is not equipped to account for structural factors has proved to be something of a problem for feminists undertaking small-scale studies of gender relations in schools.

One school of thought which utilises 'grounded theory' is symbolic interactionism. Not only have feminists found symbolic interactionism provides a useful analytical framework (not least because it privileges the accounts of the participants), but sociologists of education have also

employed it in order to explain classroom relationships (King, 1978; Delamont, 1980; Davies, 1984; Pollard, 1985a). Symbolic interactionism as a general theory of society has three basic foci: meaning, process and interaction (Blumer, 1969; Plummer, 1975). Symbolic interactionists argue that people 'perform' on the basis of meanings and understandings which they develop through interaction with others. Through their interactions with others individuals are believed to develop a concept of 'self'; this is generated through their interpretations of the responses of others to their own actions. Consequently, the 'self' is not seen as static but as constantly being refined. With regard to primary schooling, studies using symbolic interactionism have provided explanations of how the perspectives of the teachers, boys, girls (or pupils) in a particular situation are related to their immediate context; for example, Pollard's (1985a) description of primary teachers 'coping strategies'. In a similar way, feminist studies of gender relations in primary schooling have used 'grounded theory' to generate descriptions of the differences in the educational experiences of girls and boys such as teacher approaches to classroom management and control (Clarricoates, 1978; Davies, 1984). More recently, studies of boys' underachievement which have focused on boys' motivations and perceptions of schooling have couched their explanations loosely within 'grounded theory' (Bleach *et al.*, 1996; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998). This means of theorising has certain strengths in that it focuses on the individual in the context of the social group; it shows a concern for the meanings that people bring to social interaction; and, it has a conception of the individual as actively constructing social meaning (Hammersley, 1990; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Woods, 1996). However, there are limitations to what can be argued for on the basis of using symbolic interactionism.

A focus on interactions within specific social groups does not offer any insights into what *produces* the context in which the action takes place (Shilling, 1992; Layder, 1993). Symbolic interactionism has no means by which it can deal with society at the macro level; that is, it cannot account for social structures and historical change. To refer again to classroom studies undertaken by radical, Marxist and black feminists; these have been united in their political will to expose girls' and women's subordinated positions in broader social structures but the limitations of symbolic interactionism have been revealed in attempts to link classroom processes with grand theory. On the one hand, there are feminist small-scale studies of classrooms focused on eliciting girls' experiences and perspectives which have generated explanations based on observations and interviews and these have, in turn, been 'hooked' onto male power bases in wider social structures (Sharpe, 1976; Lees, 1986; Clarricoates, 1987; Reay, 1991). On the other hand, there are feminist studies which have not attempted to make connections between classroom interaction and broader social structures thus attracting the criticism that they are undertheorised (Arnot & Weiner, 1987; Middleton, 1987). As Walby (1986) has argued:

> . . . the concept of patriarchy is really outside the range of concepts admissible in the symbolic interactionist's vocabulary, since it involves notions of social structures that interactionists expressly reject. Thus their analyses are stuck on a micro level and cannot deal adequately with important forms of social structuring and hence with analyses of general changes in sexual meaning. (p. 67)

Also, because the concept of social structure is absent there is no scope in symbolic interactionism for the notion of *conflict* within social structures (Troyna & Hatcher, 1992). The emphasis is then on consensus and, as such, studies focus on the processes of accommodation and resistance. The difficulties in linking the findings of small scale studies to grand-scale theories (the micro-macro debate) has occupied a central place in methodological discussions (Hargreaves, 1978; Sharp, 1982; Woods, 1985; Scarth, 1987; Hammersley, 1990; Shilling, 1992). As was suggested in Chapter 1, post-modernist/post-structuralist approaches have proved useful in providing an alternative means of exploring situations by dismissing macro-micro dimensions and locating issues of power within discourses (Foucault; 1977; Weedon, 1987; Flax, 1995). However, it is fair to say that many feminists see post-modernist/post-structuralist approaches as problematic in that the concept of language/power residing within discourses denies the idea of women as a class and thereby undermines feminism as a political movement (Skeggs, 1991b; Jackson, 1992; Ramazanoglu, 1993; Maynard, 1995).

Several writers have argued for a theoretical framework which makes use of a range of positions. Troyna & Hatcher (1992) have argued that the inability of symbolic interactionism to address macro social structures and its absence of a concept of conflict within social structures, generates the problem of:

> . . . the unitary conception of the self within symbolic interactionism. Conflict is external; individuals deal rationally with it by distancing themselves from the social roles that they play. There is no notion of conflicting ideologies working within the individual to create

> inconsistent and contradictory forms of understanding and behaviour. (p. 38).

Therefore, a model which can retain the significance of ideological structures in the construction of identities is required. This is a similar position to the one put forward by Weiner (1994) in developing what she calls *materialist feminism.* This is a fusion of radical, Marxist and poststructuralist feminist ideas; it is a:

> category of feminist scholarship which emphasises the shifting notions of womanhood and also its dialectical relationship to other social formations such as class, family, religion . . . that is, one which contends that all human action, including that of women, is the consequence of specific cultural, economic and social conditions and influences. (Weiner, 1994, p. 21)

In the same way, reference was made in Chapter 1 to the work of Haywood & Mac an Ghaill (1997) on masculine subjectivities who have "found it productive to hold together what we identify as materialist and deconstructionist identity epistemologies, in order to access the structures and the categories of identities within educational arenas" (p. 263). A model produced by Troyna & Hatcher (1992) for their work with primary school children and racism provided an overarching framework which allowed the relationships to be shown between social structures, ideologies and context in understanding masculinities and male practices in specific settings.

The 'Flashpoints' Model and Critical Incidents

The model produced by Troyna & Hatcher (1992) was informed by one developed by Waddington *et al.* (1989) called *Flashpoints.* The framework devised by Waddington and his colleagues was intended to enable the exploration of public disorder associated with large scale events such as the miners' strike. Troyna & Hatcher (1992) point out that their focus was:

> . . . on incidents which tend to be far less spectacular; they are relatively ordinary and routine - 'trivial incidents' to use the Home Affairs Committee term. (p. 39)

Their modification of the *Flashpoints* model is one much more relevant to studies involving small scale events in which only a few, sometimes just two, people are involved. The model developed by Troyna & Hatcher (1992) has eight levels; structural, political/ideological, cultural, institutional, sub-cultural, biographical, contextual and interactional (see overleaf).

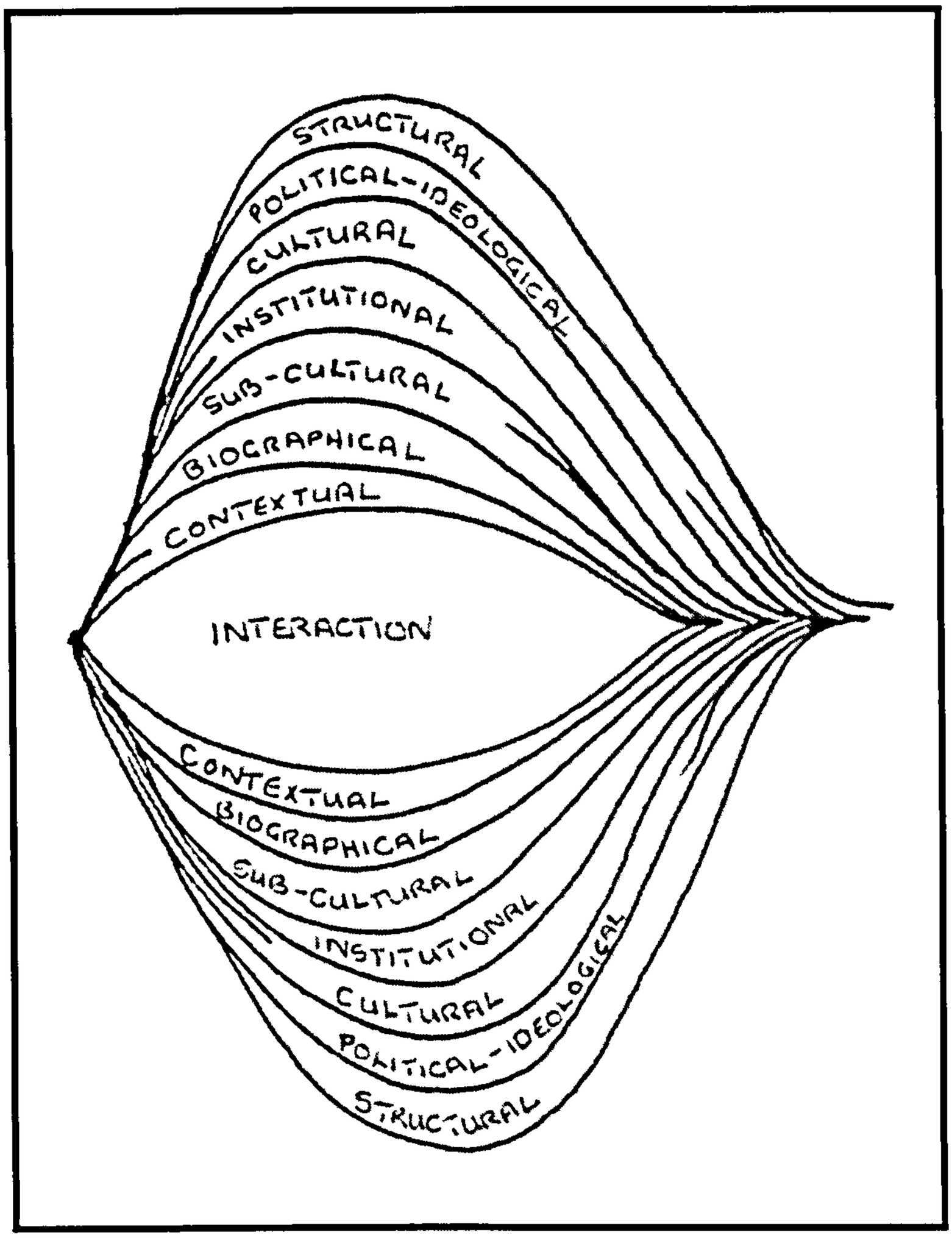

Figure 1: A model for analysing hegemonic masculinities in schools

Source: adapted from Troyna and Hatcher (1992, p. 40)

They used the model to explore routine racist incidents in schools but retained the notion of a *'flashpoint'* in order to "identify the social processes which come together in specific combinations in each racist incident whether they are an exception (. . .) or unexceptional and everyday" (p. 46). On this basis the concept of a *'flashpoint'* did not readily lend itself to my research on masculinities and primary schooling. The intention was not to focus on 'sexist' or 'genderist' incidents, but to consider how social processes came together in specific combinations for the construction of, and engagement with, hegemonic and other modes of

masculinities. For this reason the notion of *flashpoints* was replaced with the concept of *critical incidents.*

Although Woods' (1996) definition of *critical events* (or *incidents* as they appear retrospectively) describes "exceptional kinds of activity that occur from time to time in schools and that bring radical change in pupils and sometimes teachers" (p. 118), Tripp (1993) uses the term to describe how an event is *perceived.* He argues that *critical incidents* are produced by the way we look at a situation: that it is an interpretation of the significance of an event. In contrast to the understanding of *critical incidents* as 'exceptional' suggested by Woods (1990, 1993, 1996), he proposes that:

> The vast majority of critical incidents are not at all dramatic or obvious: they are mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur (. . .) which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be 'typical' rather than 'critical' at first sight, but are rendered critical through analysis. (Tripp, 1993, p. 25)

It is Tripp's (1993) definition of *critical incidents* which has been employed in this analysis of masculinities and primary schooling in order to revisit a (feminist) claim that schooling 'typically' upholds 'commonplace' or 'normative' conceptions of masculinity through structure, pedagogy and curriculum (Byrne, 1978; Mahony, 1985; Askew & Ross, 1989; Thorne, 1993; Murphy & Gipps, 1996). The substitution of *critical incidents* for *flashpoints* does not compromise the model developed by Troyna & Hatcher (1992) as, in keeping with the understandings of Waddington *et al.* (1989), they state that what converts an incident into a 'flashpoint' is not

so much its inherent characteristics as the way the incident is interpreted at the time.

In terms of the model, the eight levels of analysis link with each other but there is no implication of chronological development or linear flow. To paraphrase Waddington and his colleagues:

> (A critical incident) does not 'begin' at the structural level and proceed through the others to the interactional level. Nor do we intend to imply that (a critical incident) is necessarily predetermined by the 'higher order' levels . . . Conversely, (a critical incident) can occur at the interactional level in the absence of pre-disposing factors at the other levels . . . (1989, p. 157)

These levels of analysis are described more fully below.

Structural: Differences between the access males and females have to power and resources. These differences occur both *within* and *between* groups of men and women and are further exacerbated by social class and 'race' variables. Conflict can arise if subordinated groups cannot improve their position and, by dint of this position, have little stake in the existing institution of political and social order.

Political/Ideological: This level refers to the relationship of groups to political and ideological institutions. Egalitarianism is the espoused aim, but the real obstacles imposed because of sex and gender are deeply embedded.

Cultural: The ways in which groups of people understand and experience their lives.

Institutional: The ideologies, procedures and practices which a school sanctions, promotes and transmits.

Sub-cultural: The children's and adults' worlds in which they construct, negotiate and re-construct individual subjectivities.

Biographical: Those factors and characteristics which are specific to the individual pupil or teacher involved in an incident.

Contextual: The immediate history of an incident involving male power struggles.

Interactional: The actual event regarding what was done and what was said.

The ways in which this model generated particular findings of masculinities and male practices in the two case study schools will be discussed in the following chapter (three).

Conclusion

The intention in this chapter has been to set out the theoretical framework of this thesis. In so doing I have attempted to interrogate the research processes involved in reaching the findings which form the basis of the case study chapters. The main points that have arisen from this exercise are that, firstly, there are limitations on what 'knowledge'/findings are

produced given the positionings of, and positionings by, the researcher her/himself. The whole research process was informed by the subjective knowledges and understandings of all the participants. As Harding (1991) has observed:

> . . . a necessary moment in understanding other people and my relations to them (is) understanding how I am situated in those relationships from the perspective of their lives. (p. 283).

Firstly, this means only a partial picture can ever be provided, and this is particularly so in this case where I, as an adult, female, part-time teacher and researcher was attempting to illuminate masculinities and male practices in school settings. Secondly, to gain insights into even a partial picture of masculinities and male practices in primary schooling requires a framework which enables these to be viewed across a number of different levels from broader structural variables to specific incidents in the classroom.

The following chapter will outline the progression of the research and consider the issues which arose from the two ethnographic case studies.

CHAPTER 3

'DOING' THE RESEARCH

> The research process (-) is not a clear cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time. (Bechhofer, 1974, p. 73)

Research is "a dynamic process (-) which links together problems, theories and methods" (Bryman & Burgess, 1994, p.2). In an attempt to bring some coherence to this 'messiness', I made a decision to discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the study in a separate chapter (Chapter 2). Other aspects usually considered under methodology, for example, the location of the school sites, proved to be a crucial element in the analysis of hegemonic masculinity in the case study schools and, as such, these have been discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 7. Where aspects of methodology are dealt with in different chapters this will be indicated where appropriate.

The Research Sites and Samples

The empirical research which forms the basis of this study was carried out in two primary schools in two different areas of the North East city of Oldchester. Pseudonyms will be used to preserve anonymity. Benwood Primary School is located in a long established but economically disadvantaged area of the city referred to throughout as Wickon. Deneway Primary School is situated in a suburban and relatively newly developed area of Oldchester. Whilst the gender balance was even across

both schools, there were no ethnic minority pupils at Benwood Primary and they made up less than one per cent of the school population at Deneway Primary.

The basis upon which the schools were selected was, at the last moment, circumstantial. Initially, the intention was to focus on two Year 2 (6-7 year olds) classes in a school in the inner city over the course of one academic year. At least one day a week would be spent in the school in the Autumn and Spring terms with the main data collection period taking place in the Summer term. The school had been volunteered by the headteacher, Tom Kenning, who was familiar with research as he was, at that time, undertaking an M.Ed. at the University where I continue to be a member of staff. The headteacher also worked for the University as a tutor on the Primary PGCE course, and we had taught together for sometime as lecturers on the English programme. Problems in terms of the nature of the relationships generated between researchers and class teachers depending on *who* provides access to the classroom (Burgess, R., 1989), were also alleviated in that one of the teachers, Terry Blake, was an ex-student who had been involved in earlier research I had undertaken and had expressed an interest in taking part in the proposed investigation. The other class teacher had also expressed interest and was used to my presence in her classroom as a school practice supervisor.

Three months before the data collection period was due to begin, Tom Kenning, the headteacher, obtained a new position as head of a recently opened school, Deneway Primary School. Whilst awaiting the appointment of his successor to negotiate the possibility of allowing the research to go ahead, one of the class teachers, Terry Blake, also secured another post in a different school, Benwood Primary School. Given that

the two people who had been most involved in discussing the research with me were about to depart, and the uncertainity of whether a new head would allow the study to go ahead, I decided to reconsider the location. Both Tom Kenning and Terry Blake were committed to the idea that the research should continue as planned despite the fact they would both be entering unfamiliar environments. They both reassured me that by the time the intensive period of research began in the Summer term, they would have settled into their respective posts. So, instead of undertaking one day a week in one school for the Autumn and Spring terms and full-time observation in the Summer term, data collection would involve half a day a week for two terms and half a term on a full-time basis in each of the two schools.

Gaining access to Terry Blake's school (Benwood Primary) was relatively easy, as I had known the headteacher for several years in my capacity as a school practice supervisor and he had been a student I had taught on a higher degree course. The problem at Deneway Primary was not gaining access, as that had already been offered by Tom Kenning but finding a comparable class; that is, pupils of similar age. At first this did not generate difficulties as the head asked his staff if there was anyone interested in becoming involved and a volunteer came forward on the basis of his interest in equal opportunities. One of the by-products of this re-negotiation of the research sites was that the sample would include male teachers. Given that the teaching force in primary schools is predominantly female, I had assumed that an investigation of masculinities in primary schools would involve observing boys in at least one female teacher's classroom . Instead, an opportunity was provided to explore both male pupils' and teachers' engagement with hegemonic masculinities.

Shortly before the Summer vacation, the headteacher of Terry Blake's school left unexpectedly. This resulted in the deputy head taking over as acting headteacher, which had implications for the rest of the staff. As a consequence, I was unable to observe comparable classes in both schools. Delamont (1992) has pointed out that in 'ordinary life' few researchers manage the representative sampling set out by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and instead have to rely on opportunity sampling. Attempts were made to obviate any weaknesses this may have raised by adopting Thorne's (1993) approach of 'roaming around' the schools to broaden and gain greater insights into the *gender regimes* (Connell, *et al.*, 1982) of each institution (see also Corrigan, 1979; Burgess, 1983). At the same time, I made the decision that the data collected in each of the schools were to be researched and analysed as *independent* case studies and not seen as *comparative.*

The research at Benwood Primary School focused on a Year 2 class (6-7 year olds) and their class teacher, Terry Blake. The school itself had been built in the 1930s, with an extension developed in the early 1970s, and catered for approximately 370 children, although the school population constantly fluctuated. Data collection took place over the course of one academic year, with half a day a week or more spent observing and talking to children and teachers in the Autumn and Spring terms 1990-91, and a six week period in the Summer term.

At Deneway Primary School the data collection centred on a Year 5 class (9-10 year olds) and their class teacher, Philip Norris. The school had been opened in 1989 and was intended to eventually cater for 470 children (plus 52 nursery places). A similar time allocation was given, with half a day a week being spent in school for the Autumn and Spring terms and a six

week period in the Summer term 1991. Several days were spent observing and interviewing children in the Autumn term 1991, when they had moved into Year 6 and had another male teacher, Bill Naismith. The reasons for extending the period of data collection were, firstly, that in this term the children studied a topic on 'Gender' which was directly pertinent to the research focus; and, secondly, several members of the class had gone away on holiday before the term ended, and I had been unable to interview them.

Research Strategies

A qualitative research perspective was the one which seemed most appropriate to the aims of the study. The characteristics of qualitative research have been identified by Hammersley (1990) as:

(a) People's behaviour is studied in everyday contexts, rather than under experimental conditions created by the researcher.

(b) Data are gathered from a *range* of sources, but observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones.

(c) The approach to data collection is 'unstructured' in the sense that it does not involve following through a detailed plan set up at the beginning: nor are the categories used for interpreting what people say and do pre-given or fixed. This does not mean that the research is unsystematic: simply that

initially the data are collected in as raw a form, and on as wide a front, as feasible.

(d) The focus is usually a single setting or group, of relatively small scale. In life history research the focus may even be a single individual.

(e) The analysis of the data involves interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions and mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.

(Hammersley, 1990, pp. 1-2)

The decision to use case study as the means of exploring hegemonic masculinities in two primary schools was made on the basis that it is particularly appropriate when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed. As Yin (1989, p.23) has said, a case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used.

The research methods employed in this study were participant observation, interviews and documentary evidence (school handbooks, letters to parents, pupils records of achievement). The main criticism of case study research is that these investigations provide little basis for 'scientific generalisations' (Bryman, 1989; Rose, 1991). However, as is argued at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 9, case studies are generalisable to *theoretical propositions* and not to populations or universes (see Yin, 1989; Connolly, 1998b). In accordance with the theoretical underpinnings set out in the previous chapter, the role of the researcher will be addressed alongside the discussion of each of the research methods.

Participant Observation

Schools are busy places, and it rapidly became apparent when negotiating access to classrooms that my teaching experience was clearly part of the 'bargaining' process. Although the headteachers of both schools were prepared to allow me to undertake research without taking up a teaching role, both class teachers made it evident they expected me to undertake some teaching responsibilities. Participant observation, where the researcher has taken on the role of part-time teacher, has been the favoured approach in several studies of schooling (Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970; Ball, 1981; Burgess, 1983; Jackson, 1987). The advantages of being a participant observer are that:

> It makes the researcher a member of the institution under study and thus reduces the distance between researcher and subjects. It gives the researcher access to the same places, people and events as the subjects . . . it gives access to documents relevant to the institutional role, perhaps

> confidential reports and records, children's schoolwork . . . It might also meet an ethical point, in that one might feel, whatever the purposes and results of the research, a worthwhile contribution is being made to the life of the institution. (Hammersley, Gomm & Wood, 1994, p. 63)

However, my intention had been to adopt a non-teaching participant observer role in order to locate myself outside teacher power/authority positionings so that I could explore the ways in which boys constructed masculine subjective identities. Although I had some doubts as to whether I, as an adult female talking to young boys, would be able to develop the kind of relationship necessary to accessing this kind of information, being positioned as a teacher made such a possibility even more unlikely. As Hargreaves (1967) found in his study of a boys' secondary school, while participant observation helped in terms of his relationships with the teachers and his awareness of their concerns, it affected his rapport with some of the pupils. As a result he stopped teaching and "from that point my relations with the boys improved to a remarkable extent" (Hargreaves, 1967, p. 203). Hargreaves's experiences suggest that adopting the role of teacher in a research setting militates against establishing trusting relationships with pupils on the grounds that the expression of certain views, or the reporting of certain events, may get the child into trouble (Corrigan, 1979). I was also keenly aware of Measor's (1985) argument that "the quality of the data is dependent on the quality of the relationships you build" (p.57), recognising that the position of teacher/researcher would closely define the parameters of the research and what could be 'knowable'. The fact that both teachers allowed me access to their classes on the basis that I would engage in some teaching, together with my age and sex, enabled me to recognise that it would be

too contrived and unrealistic to attempt to be a 'buddy' to the boys in the hope of gaining insights into masculine subjectivities. Instead, as was shown in Chapter 2, the research questions were framed around the construction of hegemonic masculinities at the level of the school and, from there, the aim was to explore how boys and men teachers engaged with these forms, as well as to gain an appreciation of how girls negotiated/challenged hegemonic modes of masculinity.

The majority of the observations were made in the classroom, corridors and playground, but I also went to the swimming baths and on school visits. In the early stages this allowed me to become familiar with the children, their relationships and behaviours in both formal and informal settings. Although the focus was on masculinities in school sites it was important that all children were observed in order to uncover how they engaged with the range of dominant discourses that made up their everyday lives in school (Thorne, 1993; Renold, 1997).

During the intensive period of data collection, general observations continued to be made but much of the time was spent following up on specific 'incidents' or 'flashpoints' (see Chapter 2). This also involved more conversations with the children and adults to elicit their understandings of events as they unfolded.

Semi-structured Interviews

a) Pupils

The interviews took place towards the end of the intensive period of data collection. Whilst conversations with the children and teachers had been on-going in both schools, the relationships I had with them as a part-time teacher-researcher placed constraints on opportunities to explore any

wider issues with them not directly related to the teaching/learning task we were engaged in in the classroom. This is not strictly accurate in the case of the girls at Deneway Primary school who, perhaps because of their older age, and our similar social class backgrounds, spent a great deal of time 'chatting' about such concerns as their relationships with friends and parents, attitudes to romance and 'boyfriends', interests in 'pop stars, media and make-up' and their future hopes and anxieties about the secondary schools they would be going to. However, although there was no real need to arrange interviews with the girls at Deneway Primary, I did want to speak to the boys and so in order to demonstrate equity all pupils in the class were interviewed. At the same time, the fact that the pupils were interviewed in groups allowed for a different social mix and facilitated a different tenor and shape to the discussions than when one or two girls had approached me to 'chat'.

A major concern was how to set up interviews with the children in both schools whereby the children would be relatively relaxed and where the 'authority' inscribed into the teacher-pupil relationship would be minimised (Denscombe & Aubook, 1992). I was conscious of the need not to make the children feel pressurised into agreeing to be interviewed, so I asked each class to see me if they wanted to talk, with a group of others, about 'School'. Given that the interviews took place during lesson time it was perhaps not surprising that all the children wanted to take part. Each child was then asked to name others they would like to talk with in a group interview. This activity itself generated some interesting insights, with boys in both schools nominating virtually all the rest of the boys in their class to be interviewed with! When I attempted to limit group size with the boys at Deneway Primary School, to ensure a discussion could take place, another problem arose with a few boys being nominated over

and over again. This created a situation whereby the same boys could have been interviewed many times! This problem was overcome with the most popular boys (who had nominated each other) being interviewed together (see Chapter 7 for their explanation of this). The girls did not create similar problems, as friendships appeared to be more clear cut at any one point. So even where there was a breakdown in a friendship between opting for a group and the interview itself, the girls would quickly align themselves with a 'new' friend or friends.

I decided to use group interviews, because not only are they less inhibiting but they provide opportunities for dialogue between the participants thus allowing for the emergence of a cumulative collective narrative (Burgess, 1984; Lewis, 1992). A further advantage is that group interviews expose details about how the participants relate to one another (Denscombe, 1995). A further issue was how to structure the discussion with the children.

Much of the literature on qualitative research suggests that the identity of the interviewer (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, social class etc.) poses a potential problem for data collection. As a result, interviewers are encouraged to minimise any personal effects they might cause (Burgess, 1984; Bell, 1987; May, 1997). Such a stance was antithetical to the feminist underpinning of the study as *self*-awareness and *self*-consciousness were integral to the research process. In this case my-*self* in the interview was as a part-time, female teacher and it was the relationship I had built up with the children in that guise that was maintained in the interview situation; that is, I did not attempt to establish a different (more 'matey') relationship with the children during the interviews. To have suddenly have tried to become more intimate with

the children seemed to me to be unethical and would probably have confused them, if not made them wary. At the same time, I wanted to gain some insights into their personal understandings of classroom relationships, so I decided to frame the areas I wanted to pursue initially by setting up the kind of classroom task they were used to undertaking with me. So, the children were asked to choose from a collection of sentence beginnings such as:

I like school when . . . .

My best subjects are . . . .

My friends in this class are . . . . .

*Some of the girls (boys) in the class are all right because . . . .

What I like about some teachers is . . . .

I'm not happy if a teacher . . . .

A good teacher . . . .

Teachers treat all children exactly the same . . .

*The words 'some of' were included after the first two interviews as the children appeared uncomfortable with the assumption that they would like *any* of the opposite sex (see below).

None of the children nominated anyone from the opposite sex to form part of the group they were interviewed with. Although I wanted to explore the children's understandings of the gender relations which existed in their specific schools, I was reluctant to approach the area directly in order to obviate a form of questioning which might encourage them to position the alternative gender as 'other' and/or *oppositional* (Francis, 1998). At the same time, it was unrealistic to ignore the fact that all the groups were single-sex. In an attempt to elicit their views on gender relations without introducing gender as a category to them, two specific sentence starts were chosen; '(Some of) The girls (boys) in the class are all right because . . .' (depending on the sex of the group), and 'Teachers treat all children exactly the same . . . '.

Providing the 'sentence starts' allowed the children to choose the ones they felt comfortable responding to, rejecting those they did not want to answer, or develop their own. In fact, the children in both schools wanted to discuss all the ideas presented. These starting points proved to be just that and the children extended the conversations; for example, the children at Benwood Primary School were more keen to tell me who they were not friends with and why before saying who they did like.

The actual experience of interviewing the children was very different in the two schools. Pollard (1985b), in his capacity as a teacher-researcher, found this a relatively unproblematic exercise, partly because he knew the children:

> As a teacher during school-time I felt it to be of crucial importance to attempt as far as possible to establish a non-evaluative, 'researcher' role when out of school time and

collecting data. In fact, much to my surprise, I found this problem less difficult than I had anticipated. I had taught all the children in the year group . . . and by their relating with me as 'people-who-know-each-other-and-have-experienced-the-same-experiences' and also as having 'passed on' and 'gone up' beyond my jurisdiction. (Pollard, 1985b, p.226)

It emerged from the research at Benwood Primary School that prior knowledge of the children was a significant element in their relationships with adults in the school. My relationship with some of the boys at Benwood Primary School, as an unfamiliar, part-time, female teacher, made interviewing a very difficult process. Following two attempts to interview two different self-selected groups of boys it became evident a different approach was required. In the interviews, the groups of boys had either refused to engage with the 'sentence starts', preferring to 'fun fight' each other, or shouted each other down so that it was impossible to hear what was said, or they adopted the kinds of behaviours shown by Walkerdine (1990) when nursery boys used explicit sexual references in their discussion with their teacher. It was the policy at Benwood School for older children to undertake some work once a week with younger children. The two Year 6 boys who assisted with the class seemed to enjoy a good relationship with the children, particularly the group of boys who proved to be unco-operative with me. I approached the Year 6 boys and explained what I had been attempting to do, and asked if they would be prepared to undertake some group interviews with the boys. They were willing to do so and, rather than use the sentence starts I employed, they devised their own questions. These questions covered the same areas as the sentence starts I used, but were phrased in a 'older-pupil-to-younger-pupil' manner e.g. 'Who do you hang out with in the class?"

Other researchers employing children as interviewers have recorded both advantages and disadvantages of this approach (Gilbert & Pope, 1983; Pollard, 1985b; Bennett, 1991). In the case of the two groups of boys at Benwood Primary, an obvious benefit of this approach was that it broke through the challenging and confrontational behaviours they engaged in with me as a female, part-time teacher, but a drawback was the inexperience and lack of knowledge of interview procedures of the Year 6 boys. I talked with the two Year 6 boys at length about ethical issues and the responsibilities of interviewers. What I did not anticipate was their perceived responsibility as data gatherers towards me as a female/teacher. The Year 6 boys spent at least one hour each with the two groups, talking to them in the classroom then taking them into the adjoining cloakroom area to tape their conversations. We had agreed that they would take the tapes away with them and would listen and make written observations at any points when they felt it would have been useful for me to have actually witnessed what was happening between the boys. When the Year 6 boys visited Class B, the week after the interviews had taken place they presented me with one tape recording of ten minutes of dialogue. When I queried this I was told that they had felt that the boys had done a lot of 'messing around' in terms of swearing, making 'sexy comments' and being rude. They had not felt it right for me to have to listen to the boys being 'silly', so had edited out all the bits they felt I might feel shocked or upset by! Rather than abandon the task of interviewing these (eight) boys altogether, I salvaged what I could from the tape recordings and decided to speak to them in twos, using a notebook and conducting the interview in the classroom as part of a teaching activity based around making a book about 'My Class'. This proved more successful, if only because they were marginally less competitive when in pairs.

Interviewing the girls at Benwood Primary and the Year 5 class at Deneway Primary School proved straight forward. All interviews took place during lesson time, in areas outside the main classroom, and lasted as long as the children wanted to speak. This ranged from about 25 minutes for the younger children at Benwood Primary, to anything between 45 minutes and an hour with the older pupils at Deneway Primary.

b) Teaching Staff

Initially I had not intended conducting 'formal' interviews, because discussions with members of staff were ongoing. However, two issues emerged which made it necessary to arrange interviews following the period of intensive data collection. Firstly, although I knew how to 'do' ethnography (minimum six weeks 'in the field, mid-point analysis to identify key issues, focused observations yet continually reflexive, etc.), the pressures generated by teaching responsibilities meant that it was impossible to undertake a detailed scrutiny of all the nuances of the fieldnotes whilst still in the schools. As May (1997) points out, "researchers will always be constrained by the setting itself which may limit their abilities to conduct in-depth analysis at that stage" (p. 147). The fieldwork at Benwood Primary School was emotionally and physically exhausting - as teaching was for all the staff at the school. It was only when I had had the opportunity to follow through the critical incidents which emerged that it become apparent that more information was required from the two Year 2 teachers, Terry Blake and Mrs. Smith. These interviews took place three weeks after the fieldwork period had been completed. These were, in essence, more akin to follow-up sessions than interviews, as we had shared snatched conversations between teaching

sessions during the data collection period on the topics we discussed, such as classroom rules and parents in school.

The second issue which prompted a 'formal' interview, this time at Deneway Primary, was a result of my observations of and relationship with the class teacher, Philip Norris. He had volunteered to get involved with the research on the basis that he was personally committed to 'equal opportunities'. However, it rapidly became apparent from his attitudes and behaviours towards the girls that his understanding of equality and mine were very different (see Chapter 8). In addition, there were several instances when Philip Norris appeared to be threatened either by my presence or the research area, or possibly both. The children in his class had been told in the Autumn term that part of my reason for being in the class was that I was doing research into children and their schools. When I began the six week intensive data collection period, Philip Norris told them the reason I had not been in the school the previous half term (when I was doing the fieldwork at Benwood Primary) was that "Mrs. Skelton's probably been on holiday . . . these lecturers have an easy life". In the next few days, whenever I was making fieldnotes, he would make excuses to leave the classroom, asking me to take over, or he would offer my help to children who were requesting support from him with their work, which effectively curtailed opportunities for classroom observation. After a few weeks, I was talking to Philip Norris after school about why some of the girls opted not to take part in the races he had organised in the games session. His reply was:

> Well I think it's because . . . you've made my life more difficult with the girls. They are saying 'no' and being more

> cheeky since you've joined the class. It's because you're a woman . . . *(Field notes)*

Whether he was correct in these assumptions is impossible to judge, although at the end of the data collection period I asked the two other members of staff who had been involved with the class throughout the year if they had noticed a growing 'cheekiness' on the part of some of the girls. Both the male and female member of staff concerned said that they were aware of a growing tension between the class teacher and one of the girls (Maggie), but they had not experienced any difficulties themselves with either her or any of the other girls. Chapter 8 explores the relationships between the girls and the class teacher and, although my presence in the classroom may have given some of the girls confidence to respond to the class teacher, their comments suggest that any tensions Philip Norris experienced had less to do with my presence than his attitudes and behaviours towards them.

Some of Philip Norris's actions towards me suggested that, despite volunteering to allow me to undertake research in his classroom, he was not altogether comfortable with the situation. A few days before the conversation about the girls' 'cheekiness' took place, the class had been doing some work in the wild garden with a visiting teacher from the local environment centre, Trevor Madding. As with all visiting teachers, I explained what I was doing and requested his permission to observe whilst the class worked with him outside. He agreed, after first telling me he had been doing a Ph.D, but had given it up because he had better things to do with his life, and if I had nothing better to do with mine then he was quite happy to let me "watch the *real* workers". When we were outside, and I was standing talking to two of the girls, Philip Norris and

Trevor Madding skipped up to us, holding hands, with the former saying, "This'll give you some data to get stuck into". Given the evident disparity between Philip Norris's espoused commitment to concepts of equality and his actual attitudes and behaviours, as well as his apparent discomfiture about my presence in his classroom, it seemed advisable to organise a more formal avenue for discussion. As the data collection period was drawing to a close, I was able to absent myself from the classroom when he was teaching to take a small group either for a teaching session or to carry out interviews. At the same time, as the school was open-plan, it was never possible to remove myself completely, which did allow me the opportunity of remaining alert to what was happening in the classroom.

The interview with Philip Norris was organised during a conversation at the end of one school day when we were discussing how the National Curriculum (NC) was planned and delivered in the school. As 'equal opportunities' is one of the cross-curricular dimensions of the NC (National Curriculum Council, 1990), and is supposed to permeate all aspects of the planning and delivery of the curriculum, I asked him if he would like to discuss his own approaches to delivering the NC in more detail. He was very much in favour of this and requested that I tape record the discussion. We agreed on the areas for discussion, and the interview took place in the Parents Room and lasted for over an hour. Philip Norris seemed to talk at length and in detail about his teaching approaches, but a careful scrutiny of the transcribed conversation, when placed alongside the observations of his teaching methods, indicated that he appeared to present a 'text book' version of primary teaching; that is, in informal conversations he had challenged much of what went on in schools in terms of teacher authority and control, yet in the interview his arguments were rather more conservative.

It might well have been the case that although Philip Norris had volunteered to become involved with the research on the basis of an espoused interest in and commitment to equal opportunities, he had done so on the basis of creating a positive impression with the new headteacher. When it began to emerge from his reactions towards me that he was not particularly comfortable with my presence in the classroom, I had to make a number of moral and ethical decisions. Should I curtail the research in the school although the data collection period was nearly over? Should I offer to observe in another classroom? Should I return to the school the following term when the children would have another teacher? Could I leave the girls' experiences 'untold' either in written form for the study or verbally informing the headteacher of Philip Norris's behaviour? Should I point out to him that his initial dismissive reaction to my offer of passing original drafts of the analysis to him for checking should be reconsidered in the light of the issues emerging from the data? I made the decision that, as a feminist, I felt I had an obligation to the girls in the class to provide some indication of their experiences. I also absented myself more frequently from the classroom when Philip Norris was teaching and reminded him of the offer for him to review the analysis of the data I had collected in his classroom before incorporating it into the written study. On this latter point, he refused on the basis that he was moving to another part of the country and "had better things to do".

Whilst the contents of the interview with Philip Norris did not facilitate greater understandings of how his engagement with hegemonic masculinity informed his personal and professional interactions with the girls in the class, the events surrounding the interview itself did provide some useful insights. The unequal power relations between researcher and researched has been addressed by a number of writers, not least by

those concerned with social justice (Oakley, 1981b; Smart, 1984;Troyna, 1994; Skeggs, 1997). Where the concern is usually for the power implications associated with the role of the researcher in relation to the relative powerlessness of the researched, as Maynard (1994) has argued, these power dynamics are likely to be reversed and more acute where the respondent is male and the researcher is female (see also Scott, 1984; Smart, 1984). Philip Norris controlled what the discussion would be about, where it would take place, when and how it would be recorded; all of these are decisions a researcher should allow the interviewee. However, the seat I was allocated (a low chair whilst he sat on a taller, swivel chair), the lack of success I had securing answers to specific questions with Philip Norris talking at me, and the three occasions during the interview when he reminded me that he had *'allowed'* me to do research in his classroom (also spoke of *'permission'* and *'doing (me) a big favour'*), indicated some discomfort on his part. At the same time, although said in a 'jokey' manner, these comments together with his other actions appeared to be a direct (and successful) attempt to make me feel uncomfortable and to establish his authority in our researcher/researched relationship. Given the close association of concepts of maleness with concepts of power and authority, the interrelationships of masculinities-power-authority informed the main interrogatory categories of the data analysis.

Analysis

By the end of the data collection period I had a total of 300 (A4) pages of fieldnotes, two notebooks of observations (e.g. 'chats' with teachers after school about specific occurences during the day and practical information about such things as school catchment area, the composition of school

governing bodies etc.), 24 individual and group interviews, school brochures and other official school documents, and the class work books the children did with me. The latter were not used as a central part of the analysis, but were useful in that they provided an alternative means of exploring further some of the attitudes and beliefs they displayed in the classroom. For example, a number of the boys completed the page in their individual books on *'All About Me'* , where they were asked to write and draw 'Me at 16', as, variously, "hoisty (stealing) a car", "wiv Darren and Shaun nicking fags" (picture of local supermarket) and "being chased by the bizzies" (boys in car being chased by police); only two boys (out of the group of eleven in the class that day) drew themselves not engaged in illegal activities.

From a close scrutiny of the observational, interview and documentary evidence, two broad themes emerged which were used to index the data:

- Participants and their relationships to each other.

- Strategies employed to manage and control children in the school.

As was indicated above, fundamental to both categories were concepts of 'power'. Firstly, there were different sets of power relations evident in both case study schools: teacher-pupil; adult-child; gender; and social class. The interconnectedness of power with constructions of maleness is a central point made in the literature on masculinities, for example Brittan (1989) entitled his book *Masculinity and Power.* Similarly, where the characteristic of *authority* is associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997) it is also associated with the

role of teachers. As Pollard (1987) has pointed out "the power of the teacher to threaten the children (is) because of their role and authority" (p. 177). Thus, it was crucial to explore the links between hegemonic masculinity-authority-teacher management/control strategies. Secondly, but interconnected, there were issues related to power within particular discourses or 'circuits of power' (Clegg, 1989).

Power is a notoriously difficult concept to define as there is little agreement about what it is or how it is constituted and who can access it. Deem (1994) refers to Lukes' (1986) argument that to search for a unifying definition is a fruitless endeavour. Lukes suggests that one way different theories of power can be explored is by categorising the various kinds of questions that researchers have asked about power, such as:

- Who can adversely affect the interests of whom?
- Who can control whom?
- Who can get what - where not all can get what they want or need.
- Who can secure the achievement of collective goods?
- Where is power located or whom to hold responsible for the effects of power?
- Who gains by bringing about, or helping to bring about, the outcomes of power?

Here Lukes conceives of power as a scarce resource with the implications that some people (and institutions) will be able to access power, and that it is positively enabling for those who can access it but disabling for those over whom it is used.

This approach to defining power has been criticised by post-structuralists, notably Foucault, on the basis that:

- power is not a property of people;
- power is not inextricably linked to the relations of production;
- power can be facilitating as well as repressive.

Deem (1994) points out that these apparently differing arguments are more compatible than first appears, with the only real point of departure being the post-structuralist position that power is not a property of people. An example from the data illustrates this.

Analysis of events in the classroom pointed to the constantly shifting nature and fluidity of power as any one event unfolded. This was most clearly illustrated in an incident which occurred in September, at the very start of the data collection period, at Benwood Primary School. The teacher, Terry Blake, had the day before punished one of the boys in his class for 'talking back' by making him stand outside the staffroom door at breaktime. The following day, having learned in the pub the previous evening from another parent that his son had been "dragged round the playground by the teacher by his neck", the father came into the school,

and, ignoring the procedure to first approach the headteacher, went straight to the classroom where Terry Blake was teaching and accosted him in front of the class. An 'objective' assessment of the power relations between an educated, employed, middle-class, white, young, healthy male and a poorly educated, unemployed, white, middle-aged, rather unhealthy man would suggest that the power relations lay with the former. However, such 'objective' criteria do not reveal the nuances of power relations within any given situation at a particular time. Terry Blake was threatened and attacked in an 'unsafe' environment. He was physically attacked and made vulnerable in a situation where the support and sympathy of the community lay with the aggressive father. Also, the class of young children were witnesses but were not questioned about the events. In addition, at that particular time, education policy makers were making a great play in the media on 'parent power'.

The concern to gain insights into where power was located and a recognition of the shifting nature of power, indicated that the use of discourses would enable data analysis:

> Power is a relation. It inheres in difference and is a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. (Weedon, 1987, p. 113).

Whilst many feminists have found post-structuralist insights into conceptions of knowledge and power useful in their understandings of gender relations, the majority of those researching education have retained the principle that men as a class are constantly in the process of maintaining and sustaining power over women as a class (Middleton,

1993; Deem, 1994; Jones, 1997; Weiner, Arnot & David, 1997; Yates, 1997). This perspective was the one utilised for analysis of the data from the two case study schools; that is, it was recognised that discourses order a domain of (hegemonic male) reality whereby the effect of them is to 'silence' certain voices through their ability to authorize only certain persons to speak in particular ways (May, 1997).

The questions posed by Luke (1986), which were of central concern and generated broad analytical categories, were:

- Who can adversely affect the interests of whom?
- Who can get what, where not all can get what they want or need?
- Where is power located?

These questions enabled the identification of central themes which formed the basis of the analytical chapters. These themes centred around constructions of masculinities and the interrelationships with locale, educational policy, home-school links, teacher/authority-pupil relationships.

A Final Note: Validity and Generalisability

There is no 'one' way of undertaking 'feminist research', as is evident from the differing approaches adopted. For example, research has been carried out from the perspective that the data produced can be regarded as in some way directly reflecting an unproblematic reality. In this way 'truth'

can be discovered by applying stringent mechanisms such as control of bias and sampling accuracy (see Fennema, 1983; Kelly, Whyte & Smails, 1984). At the other extreme, post-structuralist approaches suggest that there are multiple possible 'readings' of any data (Nicholson, 1990). Between these two poles are a number of positions which have raised questions about conventional and accepted means of undertaking research (Stanley & Wise, 1993; Maynard & Purvis, 1994; Skeggs, 1995). A part of this questioning has involved asking whether the ways in which research is expected to demonstrate both 'validity' and 'generalisability' is a 'masculinist' undertaking (Stanley, 1997; Ribbens & Edwards, 1998). As Skeggs has argued:

> Validity implies that a judgement is to be made; it thus depends on who is making the judgement. It also suggests that certain criteria have to be in place for judgement to take place and it has been the role of feminist theorists to question exactly what constitutes validity. (1997, p. 32-33).

Similarly, Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) say "There are no general rules of validation that can impose an abstract order on the confusion and complexity of daily life" (p. 145). This is not to suggest that recognising the problems of validating one's research is a means of side-stepping any attempts to do so! The main solution of qualitative research to the problem of validation has been triangulation of sources, and with the proviso set out in Chapter 2 regarding knowledge production, that approach has been used in this present study. That is, the same issues have been addressed by means of different research methods specifically, observations, interviews and official school documentation.

A similar set of questions arise regarding conceptions of generalisability. The issue of whether everything that is said in case studies on institutional interactions applies exclusively to the particular site that was observed or whether the findings have some wider relevance has been widely debated (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Woods, 1996; Perakyla, 1997). As may be inferred from the discussions on knowledge production in Chapter 2, the question of generalisability proved to be crucial to the whole research undertaking and as such will be discussed fully in the concluding chapter. It is enough here to refer back to the arguments in the previous chapter regarding the generation of theory. Silverman (1993, p. 160) has clearly articulated the relationship between theory and its relationship with generalisability when he states:

> It is important to recognise that generalising from cases to populations does not follow a purely statistical logic in field research. Quoting Mitchell (1983), Bryman thus argues that: 'the issue should be couched in terms of the generalisability of cases to theoretical propositions rather than to populations or universes' (1988, p.90).

In terms of this present study, its claim to be more than a study of two local sites rests on the findings sustaining a conceptual framework which can be brought to bear on a range of research situations. This proposition will be discussed at length in Chapter 9.

SECTION 3

CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 4

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND BENWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Benwood Primary School is situated in Wickon, an economically deprived area of the North East city of Oldchester. It is a traditionally working-class area, but the decline of the coal and ship building industries contributed to steep increases in male unemployment. Also, changes in social security legislation in the late 1980s meant that children leaving school at 16 had no rights to any form of benefit. At the time of this present study, there were 432 teenage males in the Wickon area claiming dole; 180 of these were on government training schemes which left 252 with nothing to do (Campbell, 1993). Visitors quickly become aware of Wickon's distinguishing characteristics: streets in which a third of the houses are boarded up and/or burned out; shops which have heavy metal grids on the windows and across the serving counters; and the presence of children of all ages wandering the streets on schooldays. Given this situation, alternative, unconventional forms of 'work' have emerged. The 'cultural economy' became one in which petty thieving to more organised crime held a central place in the 'work lives' of many of the people living in the locale, and the ones committing these crimes were mainly young men (Phillips, 1993).

In recent years the area has attracted a fair amount of media interest, largely because of its involvement in the inner-city disturbances of the early 1990s. It has also been the subject of several studies which have considered the forms of masculinity evident amongst the men who live in

the area. The dominant form of masculinity is that of the 'hard man' (Wallace, 1992; Campbell, 1993; Phillips, 1993). Being a 'hard man' in the local community involves men:

> . . . proving themselves by having bottle, being good drivers, getting into places, looking for fights all the time, being a bit crazier than everybody else, being able to get control of other people. (Campbell, 1993, p. 201).

As hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1987), the 'hard man' image has particularly negative implications for women living in this part of the city. The potential and actual threat of sexual and physical attack by the most visible 'hard men', 14-19 year old adolescent youths, restricts the freedom of women to leave their homes and move around the local vicinity:

> My mam was full of hell about it all, saying 'the bastards, rotten little bastards', she hates them that hang around the shops because she knows I can't go out there at night because it's too dangerous and I get frightened. (Female, aged 14: Wallace, 1992, p. 48)

> It started where you couldn't go out the house in case you got run over by a hoisty (stolen) car, but now you're frightened even in the house in case you're burnt alive. . . (Female, aged 21: Wallace, 1992, p. 46)

There is a high proportion of single mothers in the area (twice the national average) and many of those who have their own accommodation have to

defend it from the 'lads' who try to use it as a place to 'doss' or see it as an easy target for burglary (Campbell, 1993). Although the people living in the area are angry with the police's apparent inability to stem the tide of vandalism and burglaries, there is an awareness that it is the actions of the 'lads' which secures media attention and, consequently, the possibility of positive changes being brought about (Campbell, 1995; Crowley, 1995; Hadaway, 1995; Watt, 1995).

This chapter will look at the ways in which the hegemonic masculinity of Benwood Primary School was partly informed by the modes of masculinity found in the wider community and the forms of relationships that existed between the school and parents. As Connolly (1994b) has pointed out in his exploration of studies of racism in schools:

> . . . little if any attention has been given to looking beyond the school gates to exploring how the particular locale has provided a site through which broader national political discourses on 'race' have been appropriated and re-worked, and how, consequently, this has impacted upon the nature of social relations in the school. (p.1)

The intention here is to consider the impact the locale of a school has on the appropriation and reworking of broader discourses on gender-power relations upon the social relations in the school and with the wider community. The following section will provide details of the school and Class B, the year 2 class to which I was attached. It will then go on to explore the ways in which the hegemonic masculinity evident in the local community was reflected and interpreted in school practices.

The School

Benwood Primary School was built in the 1930s and is typical of the schools of that period. The infant and junior sections were divided by a hall which also served as a dining room. The infant classrooms and the nursery were on two levels and the junior classrooms were on one level spaced out along long corridors. There were two playgrounds, one for infants and one for juniors, and a small grassed area. At the time the data were collected, the majority of houses surrounding the perimeter of the school grounds were either burned out or boarded up. The school had approximately 370 children on roll, and was made up of 13 classes and a Nursery. There were seventeen teaching staff in total which included three men teachers. One of them, Terry Blake, taught infant children, whilst the acting male deputy headteacher and the Year 6 teacher, who had an Allowance B for information technology, worked with the oldest children in the school. Terry Blake also received an Allowance (A) for assessment. Thus, in keeping with national statistics (DfEE, 1996), the few men teachers in the school occupied proportionally more senior management positions than their female colleagues. The numbers of children at Benwood Primary constantly fluctuated due to families moving around and between the vicinity and its two neighbouring areas.

Class B, a Year 2 group (aged 6-7 years), was made up of 24 children, 10 girls and 14 boys. All of the children were white and, with one exception, had been born in the North East. The class teacher of Class B was Terry Blake who was in his third year of teaching. More details on the children in Class B will be provided in Chapter 5. The teacher in the parallel Year 2 class was Mrs. Smith, and the acting headteacher was Mrs. Masterson.

Benwood Primary School and Hegemonic Masculinity

The significance of the social aspects of teaching on primary teachers' perceptions of their role has been widely discussed (King, 1978; Nias, 1985; Woods, 1990). This may well be linked to the 'family-oriented' organization and ethos of primary schooling, where the physical environment reflects that of the home (play area, carpet, children's work displayed on the walls), re-creating parental relationships between teachers and pupils (Hartley, 1985; Pollard, 1985a; Woods, 1987). However, similar to the situation found by Connolly (1998a) in his study of an inner city primary school, the teachers at Benwood Primary placed particular emphasis on the socialising/parental aspect of their role. Their perception appeared to be that the children needed to reach a certain level of social competence before they could be taught. For example, Terry Blake, the class teacher of Class B, said:

> I had certain academic aims for them when I first took the class over . . . I was surprised how uncommunicative they were and how little interest they showed in tasks . . . I felt very strongly that their overall language development and use of language is so poor that I had to get them talking more . . . to some extent I was trying to encourage them to be livelier . . . If you sit and read stories and sing songs for twenty minutes the children do get rather bored whereas they have learned very well to take turns and to listen to each other by and large . . . the expectations I had about their academic performance I've had to revise.

The importance placed on socialising the children before (academic) learning could take place was raised by the other Year 2 teacher, Mrs. Smith, in relation to Key Stage 1 testing. One of the science tasks involved the children devising a time line setting out their own development. However, the task was conceived of with a traditional middle-class family in mind and the girls in Year 2 at Benwood Primary apparently 'failed'. Mrs. Smith observed:

> When it came to the time line in the science SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks) most of the children got it wrong. The girls drew themselves at secondary school, then having a baby, then having another baby, then being a gran and then getting married! Well, of course, that's probably the situation for most of them. Tracey even drew herself with a baby sitting at a desk at secondary school! The boys didn't get on any better what with Wayne leaving school at primary, then drawing himself in prison, then showing himself doing his first job . . . when I asked him he said they'd teach him to 'do up' motorbikes and cars in prison - his brother's been in a young offenders institute so I guess that's what they taught him.

What the teachers at Benwood Primary aimed for in terms of their socialising/parental role was in marked contrast to their understandings of how parenting was undertaken in the local community. Whilst attempting to develop a moral and ethical framework for the pupils when in the school building, the actual disciplinary strategies used for maintaining that framework drew on similar discourses of power/control found outside the school gates.

The difficulties experienced by the local community through the behaviours of the 'lads' were shared by the school. Significantly, the competitive, intimidatory, physically aggressive characteristics evident in the type of hegemonic masculinity manifest by the collective practices of the 'lads' was reflected in the discipline and control strategies of the school. These strategies, in turn, served to inform the *gender regime* of the school. Benwood Primary did not 'choose' to perpetuate the (symbolic) forms of violence associated with the masculinity of the 'lads' and indeed did not appear to be aware that it was reflecting the dominant mode of masculinity evident in the local culture. Rather, "the pattern of practices that constructs (hegemonic) masculinity" (Kessler, *et al.*, 1985, p. 42) in the school was shaped by several factors, including relationships with parents and the community, and changes in educational legislation during the 1980s which had eroded the powers of the school. To put this into context requires a consideration of the rule framework the school placed around itself to distinguish its moral values from that of the local community. The rules imposed were more or less fluid according to the position from which the school was operating. Each position adopted was rationalised in terms of enabling the teachers to 'do their job' in an increasingly difficult climate in which the school was becoming ever more vulnerable. Three positions were identified:

- when there was a clear demarcation between school and 'outside behaviour'

- a blurring of the rules regarding parental interaction

- a merging of the boundaries when the school imitated life 'outside', in the local community.

Before discussing these three positions some indication is required of the varying relationships the school had with parents and its place in the wider community.

Parents and the School

The school brochure stated in a section entitled 'Parental Contact with School' that "Parents are welcome in school at anytime" (p. 5). It also advised parents that they could get involved in their child's school life by attending assemblies, open days and by having regular, informal chats with the school staff. The setting up of a Parents' Area with kitchen and toilet facilities would seem to indicate that the school wished to actively encourage parents to come into the building. This was an idealised situation, however, one the school might have liked. In reality the school became a virtually impenetrable fortress during school hours. Whilst the official voice of Benwood Primary offered a welcome to parents and expressed a desire to cultivate closer links between home and school, it also gave out clear messages to discourage them from entering the building. Five minutes after the bell had sounded at 8.55 a.m. all but two of the six entrances to the school were locked. Of the two remaining entrances, one provided access to the Parents' Room and the other gave admittance to the entrance lobby where the offices of the secretary, caretaker and headteacher were situated. The reason why the majority of entrances were locked was a concern for the personal safety of the teachers and securing school property.

The tragic events which have occurred in schools in recent years such as the murder of headteacher, Philip Lawrence, the stabbing of a schoolgirl at a Middlesborough comprehensive school and the shooting of children and staff at Dunblane Primary School, have prompted much tighter security.

However, the research at Benwood Primary preceded these events and, at the time, the only schools in Oldchester with any form of security were those situated in this area of the city. The school had experienced problems with parents and other adults coming into the school, stealing school property and assaulting teachers in their classrooms. At least once a week the school was broken into or an attempt made to break into it. During the time data were being collected, one attempted burglary was carried out whilst teachers were still in the school. The would-be burglar was attempting to smash through a skylight window with a brick, although he could clearly see that the acting male deputy head was observing him. He continued breaking and clearing glass away to give himself a safe entry, and only stopped when the police car siren was clearly audible. It was because of incidents such as this that security cameras had been mounted around the building and heavy steel doors installed to cover the entrances. The high metal gate to the school car park was closed during school hours, but this did not prevent the staff's cars frequently being stolen or vandalised. The teachers themselves were vulnerable to both verbal and physical attack, mainly by men. In the course of a few weeks one male teacher was confronted in the classroom on three separate occasions by angry fathers.

So, whilst parents were ostensibly welcome in the school 'at any time', there was understandable caution. As earlier research has shown, a part of teachers' technique is to use the environment, and this includes developing symbolic boundaries demarcating privacy, personal space and territoriality (Steele, 1973; Wallace, 1980; Woods, 1983). This was partially achieved by prohibiting access to many areas of the building. Also, by clearly identifying to parents the areas in the school to which they were granted access, the power relations that the school attempted to promote

were explicitly confirmed (Eggleston, 1977). Inevitably, the actual and potential threat of violence had implications for relationships between the school and community and provided an area where critical incidents occurred. School staff were obviously nervous because the building was a focus of attack and, as individuals, they were vulnerable. However, this was not the sole form of relationship between the school and local community. It was also evident that the school was seen as representative of authority, and parents would call upon teachers to act as adjudicators in local disputes.

The acting headteacher, Mrs. Masterson, estimated that for every 200 visits she received from parents only one would be connected with the academic development of their child or children. The majority of visitors were the mothers who came to school expecting her to sort out arguments between neighbours over their children. Frequently, the incidents which sparked the argument had not taken place in school:

> Mrs. Masterson: Take for example Mrs. X coming in on Monday . . . On Sunday Mrs. Y had apparently accused Paul (Mrs. X's son) of saying he was going to break Sharon's (Mrs. Y's daughter) legs. She wanted her son's name clearing . . . I suppose she'd either got nowhere arguing with Mrs. Y or she was frightened of getting a black eye so she thought she'd get the school to sort it out.

Terry Blake, the class teacher of Class B, also recalled several instances when parents asked him to intervene:

> Terry Blake: Parents are always expecting the teacher to sort out problems they have with each other . . . Bethany's mother came in yesterday complaining that Wayne (in the other Class 2) had slapped her across the face when they'd been out in the street the night before. She wanted me to punish him by slapping him back!

When fathers came to the school it was more often to physically 'sort out' the teacher for attacking their child. For example, on one occasion the father of a boy in Terry Blake's class came into school threatening to 'do him' for 'dragging my lad round by the neck'. It seemed he had been given this information in the pub the previous night by the father of another boy in the class.

Cortazzi (1991) has noted that "Awkward Parent narratives . . . focus on complaints, misunderstandings and exaggerations" (p. 101). He goes on to point to the asymmetrical relationship between parents and teachers:

> Teachers have classes of children, whereas parents have, at most, a few individuals. While teachers do strive to teach children as individuals, their role imposes a more objective, achievement-oriented approach which is quite different to parents' subjective acceptance of their children, irrespective of standards. Where teachers emphasise social justice

between many children, parents look after the welfare of their own family members. (p. 103)

At Benwood Primary the majority of parents were perceived of as 'awkward', and the particular form this took could be seen in teachers discursive construction of parents in the local community as 'adult-children'. This was presented in a number of ways, namely, that some parents could not resolve problems concerning their own children, that some would steal from the school, and that others would adopt physical or symbolically violent attitudes rather than engage in verbal discussion with teachers:

Mrs. Masterson: The parents don't know how to communicate .. . they're still immature themselves. They don't see their responsibility as parents, for example, they'll swear at home in front of the kids. Our parents just won't take responsibility . . . Some land was given to them to garden and, at first, we (the teachers) worked with them on it and it won an award but as soon as we backed off to let them get on their own they didn't bother with it. As long as there's somebody there to take responsibility they're all right but they won't take over responsibility.

Mrs. Smith: These children are only used to other children . . . as that's all their parents are . . . and they're not used to consistency.

The 'childlike' behaviours of the parents usually appeared to irritate the teachers, but it was sometimes used as a source of humour in the staffroom as when the local education authority (LEA) sent out a questionnaire requesting parental views on their children's experiences of the SATs. On the questionnaire parents were asked to "Read the following statements and then circle one number which reflects how you feel on a 1 to 5 rating score". On seeing this, the acting deputy male teacher commented, "Knowing our parents they'll look at this and say 'What's this! I'm not going to rat on my own kids!'"

The relationship with parents, then, was informed by fear/vulnerability on the one hand and a sense of maternalism/paternalism on the other. This perception fundamentally influenced the discipline and control strategies used in the school, in the sense that the 'school rules' were largely dependent upon the school's interaction with parents. At its most extreme, the teachers would identify different types of behaviour; those appropriate within the classroom and those they termed 'outside behaviour'.

Demarcating 'School Space'

A substantial body of ethnographic literature exists which considers classroom control, particularly that focusing on teacher-pupil power relations as in discussions of 'coping' or 'survival' strategies (Woods, 1977; Hargreaves, 1978; Pollard, 1985a). An important point emerging from this work is that the nature of classroom control issues, and the nature of the strategies developed to remedy these issues, are shaped by the circumstances in which they occur (Denscombe, 1985). Whilst teachers have ostensibly more power than pupils, given their legal and

institutional authority, teacher control strategies are not enacted upon a passive body of children.

It was argued above that the teachers at Benwood Primary felt both threatened yet despairing of the parenting by adults in the local community. So, when it came to matters of classroom control teachers adoption of 'indulgence' (Woods, 1977, 1979) as a way of coping generated critical incidents relating to 'authority/management' strategies:

> Indulgence is a teacher strategy in which pupils are allowed to go beyond normally accepted bounds of behaviour and where teachers decline to enforce general classroom rules. (Denscombe, 1985, p. 14)

Teachers at Benwood would make reference to what they called 'outside behaviour' in order to modify children's actions. The following excerpts from field notes demonstrate how this concept was used. These incidents were taken from observations of Class B. In the first incident Carl and Sean were sitting on the carpet:

> Carl has his arm around Sean's neck and is swaying him gently from side to side. When Terry Blake (teacher) observes this he says, "Carl and Sean . . . (long look) . . . Do that in the playground if you want but not in here". *Field notes.*

On another occasion the children had returned to the classroom after the lunch break:

Some children are trying to explain to Terry Blake that Shane has been treated unfairly by the dinner attendants at lunch-time. His attention is on what the children are saying. Rick and Bobby are standing, with other children, around the periphery of the group. Rick puts his arms around Bobby's waist from behind and attempts to lift him off the floor. Terry Blake looks up and, seeing them, comments, "That's an outside thing to do to Bobby". *Field notes.*

The phrase 'outside behaviour', or the implication that some actions were considered 'outside' activities, allowed teachers to sidestep having to confront or challenge the children about actions they would find difficult to discuss. When Terry Blake was asked what constituted 'outside behaviour' he listed fun fights, hand games and rolling around on the floor. Terry felt that it was difficult enough to control the children whilst they were in the classroom; once outside they were somebody else's responsibility:

CS: Just on the point of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, inside the classroom, the playground, outside the school . . .

TB: Yes, I've made it a definite policy here to tell the children what's acceptable in my classroom and that if they want to do some things they can do them at home. At St. Cuthbert's (previous school), I would try and reason with them more about what was more generally acceptable behaviour and what wasn't . . . except with Eric (pupil), at St. Cuthbert's, and it

almost came down to a bargain with Eric, that 'Right, this is what you do in my classroom, when you're out of school, at home, that's up to your mum and dad'. So when I came here I found that was an easy way, it was something they could understand and they could accept, that when they were in my classroom this is how they behaved and when they were outside, after school, it was up to their parents.

Mrs. Smith, the teacher of Class R, the other year 2 class, also distinguished between what she expected of the children in the school environment and what they did out of it:

CS: What kinds of behaviour are acceptable and unacceptable and does it differ depending where it takes place . . . for example, do you say you should not fight *per se* or you should not fight in the classroom?

Mrs. Smith: Well I extend classroom to playground but as soon as they're out of school, well that's up to parents and because of the way our parents are, and that is, if somebody hits you then you hit them back, we say, in school, you're in a nice school, you follow my rules and I won't have fighting. I don't like fighting so you don't do it in school. What you do outside school is up to your parents but when you're in school you're in my charge and you do what I say.

The concept of 'outside' behaviour seemed to focus on physical contact. Whether or not the physical contact would lead to actual aggression seemed to have been incidental. Any situation which suggested the slightest potential to lead to fights, such as those given above, was immediately stopped. It was not only actions involving physical contact which invoked the label 'outside behaviour'. Some of the children engaged in behaviours which would have been totally unacceptable in some schools, because such conduct was breaking the law let alone school rules:

> Mrs. Masterson: I would not tolerate a child swearing at or kicking me. When it comes to thieving . . . I can't condone it but neither can I condemn it. It's a part of their values . . . their home background. We can't compensate for the values they get from home.

These 'school rules' were unofficial, yet closely adhered to by the staff. This contrasted with approaches taken towards the official school rules listed in the school brochure where two of these rules were continually broken by teachers, children and parents.

Blurring the Boundaries

At the time of this study, the National Curriculum had been in operation for three years. Although there were obvious pressures on teachers regarding the management of the curriculum in order to reach attainment targets with children, there was little evidence in the school brochure of a change in the philosophy of how children's learning would be organised. The school brochure indicated that the philosophy of Benwood Primary

School was firmly grounded in child-centred ideology. National Curriculum subjects were briefly outlined, but parents were told that:

> The experiences a child brings to the classroom are used to develop skills in all areas of life. A project centred approach is used as the basis for much of the work we do. (School Brochure, p. 3/4)

With this in mind, parents were informed that the school rules were few, but necessary to the well-being of all the children on the school premises. Despite the claim that the rules were 'necessary to the well-being' of the pupils, two of these rules were broken on a daily basis, specifically:

> Children should arrive in school by 8.55 a.m. in time to enter the building with their teacher.
>
> Children are not allowed to bring sweets or biscuits to school although they are encouraged to bring fruit. We do have a Healthy Eating Tuck Shop which is open daily. (School Brochure, p.2)

With regard to punctuality, only half to two-thirds of Class B were at school by 8.55 a.m. The majority would have arrived at school by 9.45 a.m. Terry Blake built this staggered beginning into his daily planning. Only on rare occasions did Terry ask why they were late. When asked about this he said he simply did not know how to deal with it. At his previous school he would have spoken to the parents, but he felt that Benwood parents were not particularly supportive of the school. Mrs. Masterson's response to the same question was:

Mrs. Masterson: Occasionally we send out a letter but punctuality isn't something we can do anything about. It's the parents' responsibility, not ours, and they hate the discipline of timing.

The same reason was given for allowing children to bring sweets and crisps into school; that is, it was the parents' responsibility as to what they gave their children to bring to school to eat. At Benwood School, when teachers talked about 'parental responsibility' it was, it seemed, a code for 'parental irresponsibility'.

The school saw itself as operating on a very different basis from that of the 'outside' community, so it attempted to impose various rule boundaries for the children between the school and local community. However, the school was a part of the community and the points of contact required a relaxing of official 'rules'. Furthermore, the perception of the school regarding the ways in which the local culture operated was a strong influence on the school's policies towards discipline and control. The school's interaction with parents was located firmly in gender divisions. The burglaries, arson attacks and assaults on teachers had been carried out by men; whereas the contacts involving requests for the school to mediate or adjudicate in disputes had, in the main, been sought by women. It was the men in the area who dominated, and Benwood School incorporated the competitive, intimidating and aggressive aspects of the hegemonic masculinity enshrined in the behaviours, attitudes and actions of the 'lads' into its control strategies.

The School and 'Machismo'

As representatives of a power structure, teachers have power, but, as individuals working in a community in which they and their workplace are frequently subject to physical attack, the form that power can take is significantly limited. For schools such as Benwood Primary this situation was made explicit in the educational legislation of the 1980s. The changes made throughout the 1980s which culminated in the Education Reform Act saw a devolution of power away from the existing power structure towards a centralised system. 'Parent power', as manifested in the Parent's Charter (DfE, 1991, 1994), was intended to act as an overseer to the work of teachers (Tomlinson, 1988), although 'partnership' was, and is, the official term. However, there is now substantial evidence to show that parents have fewer 'choices' regarding their child's education than the Department for Education publicity suggested at the time (Adler *et al.*, 1989; Woods, 1992; Ball, 1993; Riley, 1994). For some schools, a 'partnership' with parents was already operating, but this was not a universal situation (Pollard, 1992). Affording parents a greater say in the running of schools assumed that some, if not all, parents in any one school's catchment area would want a closer involvement and that parents and teachers could work effectively together. Equally importantly, shifting power from LEAs to parents assumed a simple transfer of responsibilities but this could never actually be the case. Parents who already had access to the mechanisms of power would be, and are, in a much stronger position than those parents who had little or no access to those mechanisms (Deem, 1988, 1990; David, 1993; Miles & Middleton, 1995). Benwood Primary School's relationship with parents operated in different ways, but none of those ways came anywhere near fulfilling the type needed to enter into the kind of 'partnership' demanded by the legislation.

It has been argued that schools and middle-class homes have access to the same 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). For middle-class children, school is the place which encapsulates a mutually supporting set of family, school and peer practices (Becker, 1952; Sharp & Green, 1975; Furlong, 1985). This is not the case for teachers working in areas with disenfranchised pupils. Authority is not something which is given to teachers by virtue of their position but something which has to be won. This puts individual teachers in potentially difficult positions and at Benwood Primary School this was certainly the reality. As Connell *et al.*, (1982) have said:

> . . . teaching is an emotionally-dangerous occupation. Authority is something they (teachers) construct in isolation, out of their own resources so it is a part and extension of themselves. To the extent that students resist, challenge or subvert their authority, so do they threaten them personally. (p. 103)

The teachers' ways of controlling children at Benwood was based upon the strategies they had experienced of parents' dealings with the school. In interviews with the teachers it became evident that they were all keen for the children to be aware of the hierarchy which had to exist in classrooms and the school generally. To establish this hierarchy emphasis was given to intimidation:

> Mrs. Masterson: A relationship with these children has to be based on love, respect and fear. If you've got all three then you've got it made.

The teachers felt that children at Benwood Primary did not respect adults generally and, therefore, would not respect teachers. This had clear implications for control. One particular critical incident illuminates the teachers' perceptions of their position:

> Mrs. Smith: In other schools the children are much more respectful of teachers. The children here don't respect their parents, seeing the way the children talk back and the way they answer parents back in a way I wouldn't have dared to and that is brought into the classroom and it's reflected in their behaviour. The fact that certain things they play up on, you wouldn't expect and it's because they don't treat you as an adult.

The way in which this 'respect' was gained was partly through 'fear', but the actual strategies varied amongst teachers. During the interview with Mrs. Masterson a boy was waiting to see her as he had been stealing sweets from other children. She asked if I would like to observe her dealing with the boy, to give some indication of the policy she adopted. The boy came into the room and was told to sit on a low seat near the headteacher's desk. Mrs. Masterson sat on the edge of the desk and bent over towards the boy, reducing the physical space between them. She looked into his eyes and asked him to look into hers. When he did she asked him what had happened, and every time he attempted to look away whilst offering an obviously implausible explanation, she reminded him to "Look me in the eye". When the boy had finished, Mrs. Masterson, who never once moved her position, said, "I suggest you have given me a muddled story and I want you to sit outside and think about what you

have said." The boy left the room, to be dealt with after our interview had been completed. The strategies adopted by Mrs. Masterson did vary, but always appeared to rely on intimidation, if not some overt physical action:

> Mrs. Masterson: One child (boy) was totally out of control of himself . . . kicking, hitting out . . . So I threw some cold water over him to cool him down. It was a physical shock and he calmed down. But there was no negotiating until he did what I asked. From that day on he realised who was pack leader.

Terry Blake provided a similar description of himself in terms of how he wanted the class to see him, but instead of the phrase 'pack leader' he referred to himself as 'the boss'.

> TB: I mean, some children like Shane, it's clearly just a game with him. Whenever he's in a situation he likes to try and come out on top. He accepts when I'm in the class that I'm the boss but in any other situation he doesn't see that so he wants to try and play his game in whatever way he can.

The importance for the class to recognise the authority of the teacher was emphasised later in the interview:

> TB: They clearly identify with me as their class teacher and, to some extent, that's the strategy I use, you know, 'You are my class, this is how *my* class behaves', 'cause it's another way,

like when you're walking through the corridor, 'This is how *I* expect *my* class to behave'.

One of the points made by teachers, evident in some of the transcripts already given, was that parents' 'childlike' behaviour was often a barrier to effective communication. Terry Blake said of his experiences with the angry fathers, that he had tried to get them to explain fully the story behind the accusations, but was met with a continuous tirade of abuse. The lack of negotiation skills he experienced on such occasions was built into his control strategies. The strategy he used to enable this control was *not* entering into negotiation with the child or children:

> TB: I found it more difficult here to get the children to listen and to do things altogether, things like lining up and going somewhere have been more difficult and I've had to try different strategies for that, one of them being just to stand there and keep repeating what you want until the children actually do what you want. Shouting doesn't really seem to make much difference, . . . you have to find something that works with the children here.

What is not made explicit here is that confrontational body language, similar to that used by Mrs. Masterson, was essential to the success of this strategy; that is, close proximity, teacher looking down at, and into, the child's eyes. The connection of intimidating/aggressive behaviours with authority was apparent in other aspects of the school's practices.

Assembly time has been shown to be a pivotal venue where 'what the school is about' is laid down (Horbury, 1991). Many of the practices identified elsewhere in the literature on gender and schooling were

evident during assemblies at Benwood Primary. For example, the male teachers would be called upon by the headteacher to move equipment or lead the singing; teachers who could not recall a child's name would refer, in the case of boys to 'you' or 'that boy', but if it was a girl, to 'sweetheart' or 'darling' (Clarricoates, 1980; Whyte, 1986; Delamont, 1990). When the images of 'maleness' that were portrayed in assembly time and at other points across the school, such as in classroom displays and stories, were examined closely, a particular type or types of masculinities were being highlighted. The images were occasionally those of academic or sporting achievers, but more frequently portrayed maleness as physically violent, competitive and generally aggressive. Such images were at their most pointed in the stories read to the children during assembly.

The stories chosen in these assembly periods always had a moral, and tended to focus on boys and the problems they encountered or engendered. For example, a story about boys' friendships had implicit messages about 'tough' masculinity (*We are best friends,* Brandenburg, 1984). The story revolved around two best friends who were always 'scrapping', and when one of them has to move away he is asked by his friend, 'Who will you fight with? Nobody fights like best friends'. So violent behaviour was given a legitimate face because it was done within the context of friendship. Similarly, the idea that boys and girls defer to different rules was suggested in a tale about a 'good' girl who was tempted to go to the shop by a boy before going to school. She does as he asks and continues the pattern until one morning she is late and misses the coach for the school trip. She is so upset she confesses what she has been doing to the headteacher, who tells her that through missing a treat he doubts she will ever tell a lie again. The boy's behaviour was not brought into question.

During the Friday morning assembly, 'Achievement Awards' would be given out. These awards were given for good behaviour and good work. The recipients of these awards were mainly girls and, to a lesser extent, the younger boys in the school. Occasionally references would be made to the 'lads' who were more likely to be found standing outside the staffroom at breaktimes than at the front of the assembly hall being praised. These were never phrased in a condemnatory way, but in a manner which suggested that boys negative behaviours were condoned. For example, when a Year 3 girl received an award for good behaviour the acting male deputy headteacher said:

> Where's Stephen (girl's brother)? Oh there you are . . . Tania obviously doesn't take after you! I can't see you ever getting an award for good behaviour (laughing) but we live in hope, we live in hope! (Spoken in a humorous way and all teachers, pupils, including Stephen, laughing). *Field notes.*

Stephen was a member of the school football team, the progress of which was a regular feature of assembly time. The status accorded to the football team in the school, and the amount of time and effort given to it by the (male) acting deputy headteacher and the (male) Year 6 teacher, was useful in controlling and disciplining some of the more troublesome older boys who were passionate about football. However, whilst football promoted camaraderie amongst the boys and men teachers, and status was given to the team players by all teachers at assembly time, any interest the girls may have had in taking part in some way was overlooked and they were thus excluded (see Chapter 8).

It was not only through stories that an image of masculinity celebrating violence, and 'toughness' was singled out. The videos which were shown to children during wet playtimes tended to be violent cartoons such as *Ninja Turtles* and *Tom and Jerry*. Also, in one of the Year 2 classrooms Mrs. Jones, a part-time teacher, put up a large display based on Anthony Browne's 'Champ' books and labelled, 'Don't be a Wimp, be a Champ'. It was an interactive frieze which meant the children's attention was constantly being drawn to it as they resequenced the events and sentences.

When the implied messages in the stories are considered in relation to the concept of 'outside behaviour' then the children were, in effect, being told that male physical violence is understandable, acceptable and, by definition, a 'skill' which boys should learn to develop.

Conclusion

One of the main aims of this present study is to reflect on the proposition, put forward in much of the feminist literature on education written in the 1980s, that schools uphold normative conceptions of masculinity through curriculum, pedagogy and structure (Spender, 1982; Mahony, 1985; Skelton, 1989). When the data collected at Benwood Primary were considered in the light of more recent theoretical positions, such as those offered by deconstructionists and masculinity theorists, the complexity of how schools develop particular *gender regimes* became apparent and highlighted the simplicity of earlier notions of schools operating *a* masculine 'norm'. Although the National Curriculum brought the subjects taught to 5-16 year olds into line, *how* they were to be delivered was not (in 1991) prescribed. In keeping with existing research on primary teachers (Nias, 1985, 86), the teachers at Benwood Primary placed great

emphasis on the socialising aspect of their role as, in their case, this was seen as instrumental to enabling their teaching/instruction role.

The stress placed on the socialising function of teaching was a response to the perceived inadequacies of the parents in the local area. The relationship between teachers and parents was characterised on the part of the teachers by, on the one hand maternalism/paternalism and on the other hand by anxiety and fear. The parent-child conceptualisation of the relationship between teachers and *working-class* parents has been noted by Cortazzi (1991):

> In the working-class areas social, rather than academic, problems were emphasised.
>
> - It's very much a social job that we do as well as teaching, helping them out, following their court cases and divorces.
> - Some of them are involved in all sorts of (social) services, there's someone telling them about this and someone advising them about that, and they come to us when they've just had enough of these people. (p.107)

The social class differences, which appeared to inform relationships between teachers and parents, were further intersected by gender. It was said earlier that mothers would visit the school to discuss perceived arguments or injustices, whilst the less frequent visits by fathers were characterised by threats of physical violence against teachers. Cortazzi (1991) also alludes to this gender difference when he cites the words of a working-class mother saying to a headteacher "I'll send my husband

round if this doesn't stop." (p. 108). The potential for violent attack on the school and the teachers, placed Benwood Primary in a defensive position across a number of fronts.

In order to ward off the threat of physical aggression, the school and the teachers adopted the kinds of defensive strategies identified by men in their accounts of developing masculinity (Kaufman, 1987; Cohen, 1990; Jackson, 1990). Hence, the school was armed with defensive weapons (security alarms, high fences, surveillance cameras) and the teachers' bodily stances and verbal control methods inferred they were constantly on their guard (Seidler, 1991). In addition, the particular control and management strategies used by teachers reflected the intimidatory, aggressive aspects of the hegemonic masculinity evident in the local community (Phillips, 1993; Campbell, 1993, 1995). The concept of 'outside behaviour' was used in an attempt to differentiate its form of control from that same control exercised in the local culture, particularly by the 'lads'. In effect, teachers used the same masculine forms of authority to control all pupils, not just the boys, because both male and female teachers felt this was the only kind available to them. Also, although the intention was to distinguish between what the school expected and what was expected of children 'outside', the perpetuation of stereotypical images of 'good, quiet girls' and 'tough, naughty boys' could be seen in assemblies, wall displays, stories and the attitudes of some teachers.

As Connell (1995) reminds us, at any given time, one form of masculinity is culturally exalted over others, thus bringing into question the idea of schools perpetuation of *a* male 'norm'. The data discussed in this chapter suggest that although schools are sites where a multiplicity of masculinities are constructed, negotiated and re-constructed, the modes of

masculinity are shaped, informed by, and dependent upon, access to power. Benwood Primary School is in an area of Oldchester in which certain forms of masculinity are inaccessible and/or rejected, and the existing images available influence the type of hegemonic masculinity projected by the school. Although it is important to bear in mind that the findings of ethnographies cannot and should not be generalised to *all* similar situations it is fair to say that, in schools such as Benwood, which has a problematic, if not uneasy, relationship with parents and the local community, the school staff are in a more vulnerable position than teachers in a school where there are shared values with the home. This vulnerability makes it more likely that tactics which appear to be effective in maintaining some form of control in the local community will be drawn on to reinforce the control and discipline strategies used inside the school.

Changes in educational legislation of the 1980s compounded problems for vulnerable schools like Benwood Primary by forcing the school and staff onto their own resources and those of the local community. Parents in economically deprived areas do not have access to mechanisms of social power and so cannot fight the school's corner effectively (Deem, 1990). Teachers in these schools are likely to find themselves associated with institutions at the bottom of league tables, which could inevitably affect their career prospects and job security.

It has been shown in this chapter how the pattern of practices which together reflected aggressive types of masculinity at Benwood Primary School was partly informed by the modes of masculinity found in the wider community and the forms of relationships that existed between the school and parents. The next chapter will consider how the infant boys in Class B constructed, negotiated and reconstructed masculine identities in

relation to, and intertwined with, the dominant version of masculinity of the school.

CHAPTER 5

'BECOMING MACHO': INFANT BOYS, MASCULINITY AND SCHOOLING

> Because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities . . . it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (Butler, 1990, p. 2)

The concept of identity has taken a central part in academic and political discussion and debate in the 1990s (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 1997), and specific interest has focused on the formation of masculine identities in school settings (Connolly, 1995a; Jordan, 1995; Heward, 1997). This research has attempted to provide explanations of how masculinities in school are shaped in relation to broader social processes. That is, masculinity is organised on a macro scale around social power, but the education system in this society is such that access to social power, in terms of entry to higher education and professional careers, is available only to those who possess the appropriate 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). It has been argued by some commentators that those boys who are unable to obtain entry to the forms of social power schooling has to offer, then seek alternative means of publicly demonstrating their masculinity, such as through the use of violence or demonstrating sporting prowess (Segal, 1990; Seidler, 1991; Back, 1994).

The boys in Class B at Benwood Primary were at an early stage in their school careers and the knowledge of themselves as 'school successes' or 'school failures' lay in the future. However, boys start school having already begun the process of constructing and negotiating their masculine identities in the home and amongst friends in the local culture. Schools, as sites where a multiplicity of masculinities are deployed (Mac an Ghaill, 1996a), will necessarily have an impact on the shaping of masculine identities. The boys in Class B, therefore, negotiated masculine identities through various discursive positions such as being a *boy, white, child, school pupil,* a member of the so-called *'underclass'* (Morris, 1994; Collier, 1995; Williams, 1997) etc.

The focus in Chapter 4 was on the pattern of practices at Benwood Primary which reflected the hegemonic masculinity found in the local community. The broad aim of this chapter is to explore how particular social processes contributed towards the ways in which the boys in Class B constructed, negotiated and reconstructed their masculine identities in the school setting. At the same time, only a partial picture of boys' masculine identities at school can be offered. The findings presented here provide a partial picture, in that the focus is on the hegemonic masculinity given ascendancy in the school itself, particularly on the control and management strategies, and how boys, as pupils, drew upon, negotiated with and challenged it. There is no claim to having made insights into how individual boys at Benwood Primary made sense of their masculine subjectivities. The reasons which precluded an exploration of the boys' subjectivities were discussed in Chapter 2.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides information about the boys themselves. This is followed by a

consideration of the 'knowledge' boys brought with them to school regarding being a 'lad'; that is, the culturally exalted form of masculinity predominant in the Wickon area. The third section explores some of the discourses within which the boys were positioned and, in particular, examines the tensions between *being a boy* and a *school pupil*. Here, and in section four, the focus will be on a boy called Shane, as the critical incidents generated by his actions and behaviours provided a means of exploring the 'apprentice lad' mode of hegemonic masculinity as constructed and negotiated by the boys in the class. The final section reflects on where boys positioned themselves with regard to the 'apprentice lad' form of masculinty and in their relationships with each other.

The Boys

There were 24 children in Class B, a Year 2 group (aged 6-7 years old). The class was composed of 10 girls and 14 boys, all white and with one exception, a girl from Scotland, had all been born in the North-East. There were four boys in Class B who were immediately noticeable: John; Shane; Luke; and Robert. John and Shane made their presence known to any newcomer, adult or child, to the class. They took the lead in encouraging behaviours amongst the other boys designed to 'suss out' (Beynon, 1984) unfamiliar teachers; for example, responding to a query or instruction by ignoring or answering back, and engaging in general 'tomfoolery' rather than work. During the course of the year these two boys were, at various times, the best of friends and the worst of enemies. The tensions between them occurred largely as a result of their intense rivalry for, what they referred to as, the 'first boss' position. Both boys came from families who had a high profile in the Wickon community in terms of their notoriety.

During the time of the research both families had substantial contact with the police. At the beginning of the observation period one of Shane's brothers was in a remand home. He escaped from the remand centre on three separate occasions, and each time was rearrested at the house of one or other of his aunts. John's father was also in court, involved in a protracted trial; this information was given to the school by John's mother, although no indication was given regarding the crime.

Luke also made his presence known. Although keen to associate himself with the activities of John and Shane this was not the reason why he secured attention. Rather, his *lack* of success at being seen as one of their accomplices resulted in jealous behaviours on his part which consequently attracted the attention of teachers. Also, the fact that he was the largest and most unkempt boy in the class gained him some unwelcome attention from the other children. Luke spent a substantial part of his time in the class trying to be accepted by the others, as he seemed universally disliked by boys, girls and teachers. In interviews the other children listed the reasons for disliking him as 'fat', 'smelly', 'snotty-nosed' and 'having skid marks on his pants'. One of the ways in which he attempted to compete and, at the same time, gain kudos with John and Shane was to compare the activities of his male peers with theirs; for example, when Shane announced in 'news time' that his brother had been recaptured by the police, Luke announced that his cousin had been arrested along with his 'mates' for doing a 'hoistie' (stealing a car).

Robert stood out in a totally different way. He had recently moved into the Wickon area from a part of Oldchester, also economically deprived, but which did not have the same reputation for crime. In contrast to all the other boys, he seldom indulged in disruptive behaviours and certainly

never instigated them. On the occasions when the teacher, Terry Blake, was absent and a part-time or supply teacher had to take the class and disruption on a mass level occurred, he would frequently offer reassurance by explaining to the harassed teacher why such behaviours were happening. He was a boy who, if not keen to work, would comply and make some attempts to complete the tasks he was set. Robert was described by both Terry Blake and Mrs. Smith, the other Year 2 teacher, in terms of being a 'really nice boy'.

As there did not appear to be any tight friendship groupings amongst the boys, it might be argued that this reflected the literature which says boys tend to form large, loosely connected groups (Lever, 1978; Woods, 1987). However, in common with Thorne (1993), I am aware of the risk that by simply comparing the overt characteristics of boys' friendship groups with those of girls the complexities of boys' friendships are overlooked. For example, whilst Luke was an obvious outsider, Carl and Rick were also marginalised within the boys' group because of their physical appearance and personal habits; Rick because he was 'smelly' and Carl because he was 'slavery' (he dribbled). As a result of being avoided by many of the children in the class they tended to seek each other out at 'choosing time'.

The remaining 8 boys can be loosely grouped in terms of their relationship with John and Shane. As was said earlier, it tended to be those two boys who instigated the majority of competitive, challenging behaviours both to authority and amongst their peer group. Gary, Tommy and Matt were always the first to join in with John and Shane and, occasionally, attempted to initiate and take the lead in various challenging actions. Bobby, Adam, Dean, Sean and Martin always took part in any group actions but were unlikely to lead. Observing the way in which the boys

tended to take up the same positions in the group whenever a challenge was mounted to a teacher's authority or for a confrontation with boys from another class, reminded me of the organization of the army during the Second World War.

Although a very crude analogy, it provided a useful image of the boys metaphorical and often literal positions in the group:

- the generals (John and Shane), who organised the action and led the initial assault;

- the regular soldiers (Luke, Gary, Tommy and Matt), who were were quick to see what was required and proficient in supporting the actions of the leaders;

- the conscripts (Bobby, Adam, Dean, Sean and Martin), who realised they had to join in but their involvement was minimal and they literally positioned themselves on the periphery of the action.

- the group who could have been seen as conscientious objectors (Robert, Rick and Carl), although for different reasons. Robert's preferred style of challenge was verbal whilst Rick and Carl recognising their marginal position amongst the boys preferred to avoid contact with the rest of the group. At the same time Robert, Rick and Carl (and indeed the 'volunteers') always took some role in any action possibly because the alternative was more personally threatening.

As has been pointed out in feminist research and by several writers on masculinities, for many boys school days are characterised by avoidance; specifically, avoiding showing emotion or any sign of 'weakness' (Mahony, 1985; Jackson, 1990; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). Although writing of boys' public schools, Christine Heward (1991) has encapsulated the essence of this literature when she says of schoolboy culture that:

> . . . acceptance into friendship groups and the power structure of the (group) depended on conformity to its rigid set of norms. The aim of baiting (a) victim was to exploit his weaknesses to the point where he broke down and showed any sort of emotion, anger, fear, distress, pain. Such outbursts (are) then ridiculed . . . (p. 21)

The important issue here is that the boys could be discussed as a 'group', on the basis of a shared relationship to the hegemonic masculinity of the local culture/school where they constructed and negotiated masculine identities at various levels. Although the boys in Class B were too young to access the forms of power utilised by the 'lads', they were aware of the power and status the 'lads' held and, as males themselves, knew they would eventually gain entry to this fraternity. Indeed, as will be shown, the actions of the boys, particularly those of Shane and John, can be interpreted as ways of 'working' themselves into older forms of masculinity in preparation for this time (Redman, 1996).

The interrelationships between the boys in Class B will be considered in the fourth section. The next section will consider the knowledge about masculinities the boys brought with them to school.

Boys, Masculinities and the Local Culture

It was shown in Chapter 4 how the 'hard man' image of masculinity occupied a high status in the Wickon area, particularly amongst the 'lads'. Chapter 6 will focus on the heterosexual aspect of that particular form of hegemonic masculinity, but the intention here is to consider the implications of being a 'hard man' for the interrelationships of the 'lads'. The purpose of this is to provide insights into the particular hegemonic masculinity of the 'lads' which the boys in Class B would have become familiar with; a familiarity which would help shape their own masculine identity.

Being a 'Lad'.

The 'lads' hung around together, but the evidence from studies of the area indicates that there was always a leader or leaders who managed the alternative, unconventional forms of 'work' which they engaged in. The 'cultural economy' was one in which petty thieving to more organised crime held a central place.

> There is a hard core of 14-19-year olds and usually an older man, about 25 or 30, who encourages them. It's dead hard keeping your kids away from street culture. These boys belong with each other. They bond to each other. They brag about how they get away with what they do . . . They hear, so the story goes, that they can make up to £300 a week with petty thieving and far more through organized crime. These kids see that as a legitimate goal. (A mother quoted in Phillips, 1993, p. 33).

The criminal fraternities were well known on the troubled estates. They belonged to small networks, often only a handful of extended families, fortified by their access not only to an arsenal - guns, crossbows, catapults - but also to a battalion of cousins and uncles, and orbiting around them, their courtiers, admirers and apprentices. (Campbell, 1993, p. 176).

One of the ways to achieve high status within the group was via the confrontations with authority structures, notably the police. Particular kudos could be gained if their activities attracted media coverage. So, local and national television footage of high speed car chases and, on one occasion, the theft of a well-publicised 'thief-proof' police car from the police station car park, brought credibility and status amongst peers and "admiration and respect from younger ones" (Wallace, 1992, p. 28). The intra-group struggle for a position in the hierarchy has to be seen in relation to inter-group, cultural/regional contestations. The inner city disorders of September 1991 highlighted the 'lads' competitiveness. The street disturbances began in an area seven miles to the east of Oldchester. Residents of Wickon felt that a combination of the 'lads' competitiveness and the media attention succeeded in spreading the disorder:

> I knew for a fact that there would be bother here after (area) went up. The lads here man, they think they're the hardest and they were sick of (area) being in the paper and on the telly. They wanted Wickon to be in to show they were just as good, if not better. (Female, aged 17, quoted in Wallace, 1992, p. 30).

Being a 'lad' also had racist overtones. For those males in Wickon who were anything other than white meant being positioned as a form of *marginalized* masculinity (Connell, 1995). There is a history of National Front and British Movement involvement in the Wickon area, and racism is evident in young men's views of the predicament of the Asian community during the disturbances of September, 1991:

> Most of the buildings that were torched in Wickon were empty, and burning an Asian's house or shop doesn't count. (Male, aged 17)
>
> The darkies (Asians) are always whinging about something. It's us (whites) who should be though, we've got to live beside them. (Male, aged 21)
>
> *Source:* Wallace, 1992, p. 34.

Given the large family networks living in Wickon, it is likely that the boys in Class B were familiar with what was entailed in being a 'lad'. The characteristics that allowed access to 'laddish' culture were being tough, competitive and white. Being a 'lad' also involved taking on a certain role as a member of a gang or group. The boys in Class B had probably observed their male relatives engaged in struggles over hierarchical positionings in their various gangs or groups. Indeed, the fact that the males in the families of both John and Shane occupied a 'ringleader' status was reflected in their own struggles to be head of the boys' group.

Media, Machismo and the 'Underclass'

Chapter 6 provides further examples of sources which informed boys' knowledge of gender relations, and it is enough here to simply note the

significance of the media. The images of masculinity transmitted through the television programmes and videos the boys enjoyed were particularly 'macho', for example action movies by Sylvester Stallone and horror films such as *Nightmare on Elm Street* (Donnerstein & Linz, 1987; Miedzian, 1992). Ironically, whilst right-wing dogma of the early- to mid-1990s argued that the reason for juvenile crime was the result of single parent (mother) families (Dennis, 1997), the problem for Wickon youth was not that they were starved of male role models, it was that they were saturated with them.

Similar to Connolly's (1995a) 'Bad Boys' whose masculine identities were constructed and negotiated in a culture concerned with day-to-day survival, so too the boys in Class B were engaged in constructing masculinities informed by discourses of boyhood and childhood particular to the local context.

Discourses on Being a Boy and Childhood.

In discussing discourses on *boys* and *childhood* prevalent in the local culture, the intention is not to create an artificial divide, as clearly there is a dialectic. It has been argued in the literature that by the time they come to school, girls and boys are not only aware of their gender category but that it is very important to them (Davies, 1989; Jordan, 1995). This work has shown that young children invest a great deal of effort in establishing themselves, personally and publicly, as a member of their gender group. Being a male in Wickon was associated with forms of power (albeit subversive/anti-authority forms). So whilst young boys were not in a position to access those avenues of power, it was something which would be available to them in the future.

On the other hand, being a young child in the Wickon area appeared to be a necessary but undesirable phase; that is, where babies were proudly paraded round the streets in their prams and adolescence heralded new found status, childhood was framed in a similar way to that of working-class children in Victorian times and earlier, where the emphasis was on practicing to be an adult (Cunningham, 1991; Hopkins, 1994). For example, the children in Class B sported hairstyles, clothes and, occasionally with the girls, makeup, which reflected the fashions of adolescents. Children might also be encouraged to drink alcohol and smoke. Shane informed the class one 'news time' that he had been to the local pub where his dad and his mates had given him some beer. Whilst there have to be some reservations regarding the accuracy of such comments given the boys' desires towards 'laddishness', some observations suggested these were not necessarily fabricated accounts. One morning Adam came into school looking pale and saying he felt sick. He said his uncle had put a 'tab' in his mouth and told him to suck it. Adam had done this but it "tasted horrible so I chucked it on the floor and stood on it. Me uncle was cross 'cause it was a new 'un." *(Field notes)*

These factors contributed to shaping the boys' knowledge, awareness and construction of their own masculine identities. This construction, negotiation and re-construction of personal masculine identities was continued in the more public arena of the school. Here the boys were confronted with ambiguities identifiable between the school and local cultural discourses on childhood. Furthermore, they also encountered the tensions involved in discourses on *being a boy* and a *school pupil.*

The 'Nature' of Childhood

Beliefs and assertions about childhood and the nature of children have been, and continue to be, important elements in the professional ideology of primary school teachers (Pollard, 1987). One line of argument suggests that these beliefs contain ambiguous conceptions of children; that is, between teachers' societal and individualistic aims (Ashton *et al.*, 1975). From this perspective, teachers' societal aims position children as immature, irresponsible and dependent and, therefore, pupils need to be taught certain things for the benefit of society. On the other hand, teachers' individualistic aims stress the importance of personal growth and self-expression for their pupils. Whilst this is clearly only one view of teachers' professional ideology, there was evidence of some ambiguity when Benwood Primary teachers discussed their aspirations for their pupils. Teachers linked the development of self-esteem (individualistic aims) with the ability of pupils to take responsibility for themselves and their actions (societal aims):

> Terry Blake: . . . one of my goals for next year will be to try and raise their self-esteem more . . . At the beginning of the year when I gave them a task there were a good eight or nine children who would just sit at the table and do nothing until I actually spoke to them individually . . . that happens less and less . . . I encourage them to work and think for themselves . . . I suppose that's perhaps the aim, to get them to think more for themselves about what they're doing. . . to take responsibility for their learning.

Mrs. Masterson: My aims are for the children to come to some sort of ableness . . . to think for themselves, to engage in their own learning. That means raising their self esteem, their self confidence as the parents don't. I'm not bothered about the National Curriculum . . . they'll get that . . . it's *how* they learn, getting them to think, getting them to take responsibility for themselves, that's important.

The stress given here to developing a sense of 'responsibility' in the children seemed to have resonances with parental aims. Encouraging 'responsibility' could be interpreted as the school's desire for pupils to develop independence and show maturity. Similarly, those parents who dressed their children as adolescents and encouraged adult behaviours such as smoking and drinking might also be seen to be promoting maturity/independence. However, as implied so far, the reasons for, and means by which, this independence and maturity was fostered, differed between teachers and parents. In fact, the strategy teachers employed to encourage boys to take responsibility had an unintentional consequence, as will be shown in the section on *Self-esteem and Masculinities*.

As can be seen from the quotations above, teachers linked the development of pupils' self-esteem with a greater sense of responsibility. Not only was self-esteem believed to facilitate pupils' abilities to take responsibility for their learning, but much of the psychological literature on classroom behaviour links negative behaviour with low self-esteem (McIntire, 1984; Fontana, 1988). Therefore, it could be argued that if pupils acquired higher self-esteem then a consequence would be increased

conformity to classroom rules. However, the boys in Class B were positioned by multiple discourses and a particularly powerful discourse was of being a 'lad' or, in their case, an 'apprentice lad'. The tension created was that being a *school pupil* and being a *lad* demanded conflicting behaviours. Whilst developing self-esteem might encourage conformity to classroom rules in the boys as *school pupils*, the opposite (lack of conformity) was expected of the boys as 'apprentice lads'.

School Boys and 'Being a Boy'

For the teachers, taking responsibility meant pupils recognising and conforming with the school authority structures; but for the boys *as* boys, 'responsibility' had implications for power dynamics:

> Although boys may maintain a privileged position in relation to girls in the school context, the schoolboy nevertheless is required to accept inferior status to the teacher, to experience powerlessness in the face of adult rule . . . While boys are required to comply with the school's construction of the regulated student, the social construction of hegemonic masculinity promotes masculine subjectivity as less regulated, less conforming, and less compliant than schooling practices accommodate. As opposed to the constitution of the schoolboy as student, hegemonic masculinity ultimately refuses to be regulated or controlled. (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997, p.55/56).

The question here is how the tensions between discourses on *school pupil* and those in the local culture of *being a boy* were manifested. A useful starting point is to consider the boys' understandings of what was

important to them, as boys, in the classroom. The following conversation suggested their main concern related to their position in the masculine hierarchy:

Luke: Who's the boss?

Shane: I'm the boss!

John: *I'm* the boss!

Luke: One can be first boss and one can be second boss.

Shane: Who's first boss and who's second boss?

Robert: You can take it in turns.

Shane and John (in unison): I'll be first boss!

Robert: Shane is first boss and John can be second boss.

Luke: Yes.

Shane: I'll be first boss, John'll be second boss . . .

Luke: I'll be third boss and Robert can be four boss . . .

John: Shane'll be first boss, I'm second boss, Luke three boss and Robert four boss.

Robert: I don't want to be four boss.

Whether Robert's protests were because he did not want to be *fourth* boss, or because he did not want to be considered a *boss* at all, is not known, but either way it is not pertinent to the issue raised here. It can be argued that two different agendas were in place. For the teachers, the aim was to foster a sense of responsibility both academically and behaviourally in the boys (and girls) as *school pupils,* whilst for the boys the main concern was to establish their masculine identity and place in the male hierarchy. The next section will explore this by focusing on how the ways in which teachers attempted to develop self-esteem in Shane inadvertently contributed towards his struggle for 'first boss' position.

Self-esteem and Masculinities.

Sociological studies of schools in working-class communities have identified the tensions between the culture of the school and that of the locality in which it is situated (Willis, 1977; Connolly, 1995a). The arguments presented suggest that schools are seen by the local populace as ineffective and out of touch with the 'real' world which they inhabit, whilst a powerful strand within state education has been to see its role as transforming the culture of working-class children (Corrigan, 1979; Dubberley, 1993). Shane and John did not aspire to secure the approval of their teachers for conformity and 'good' behaviour, but to gain the recognition of the other boys and adults in the school of their potential as a 'lad'.

Mac an Ghaill (1988, 1994) has shown how the 'Macho Lads' in his study linked teacher and police authoritarianism and, as a consequence, developed their particular 'tough' version of masculinity around collective

strategies of counter-interrogation, contestation and survival. Although it is fair to say that the boys in Class B were probably aware of the similarities in the roles of the police and teachers in terms of control and discipline from an early age, the latter did occupy a different position. Terry Blake and Mrs. Masterson referred in their interviews to the ways in which mothers would use the school as a threat by saying to pre-schoolers they would not be able to act in 'that' way when they went to school, and to older children, that they would "tell the teacher" about the child's behaviour. It was argued in the previous chapter that relationships between the teachers in the school and the local community were partly based on notions of maternalism/paternalism and partly by fear/vulnerability and a similarly conflictual position could be observed in relationships between the boys and teachers. As will be shown in the section on *Inter Group Conflict* the young age of the boys meant that they would look to adults (teachers) as a source of comfort and protection. At the same time, the way in which the 'lads' would stage events or engage in activities that would enable them to demonstrate superior skills, such as by driving faster than the police in stolen cars, the boys in Class B would 'try out' the authority of the teacher.

At the beginning of the research period, Terry Blake remarked that a substantial part of his time was spent attempting to contain the behaviours of Shane and John. He argued that their most prevalent misbehaviours were 'talking out of turn' and 'hindering other children' (Wheldall & Merrett, 1988). This may well have been the case, but observations indicated that the greatest proportion of his time was spent in confronting behaviours which directly challenged his authority as teacher. For example:

Terry Blake is reading a story to the children who are sitting on the carpet. Adam, Vicki and Katy have each asked over the last few minutes if they can go to the toilet (the rule is only three children are allowed in the toilets at any time). John stands up and walks past Terry Blake saying he is going to the toilet. Terry Blake calls him back and says he must wait. John sits back down. After about ten seconds he stands up and goes to the toilets even though none of the other three have returned. He stays out of the room for about ten minutes but continues to pop his head round the door to smile at the others (Terry Blake has his back to the door). *Field notes*

It is a games session outside on the playground. The children are lined up against the wall to be sorted into teams. Terry Blake asks them to stand tall. Shane sits down on the ground. *Field notes.*

Terry Blake recognised that occasionally the boys, but Shane in particular, would challenge his authority. He dismissed these challenges as ineffective, but suggested that Shane's tactics might be more successful with others:

> Terry Blake: I realise this is a negative strategy but I tend to focus on one child in a group who is not doing what has been asked . . . although what I do probably depends on different children. I mean, some children like Shane, it's clearly just a game with him. Whenever he's in a situation he likes to try and come out on top.

> He accepts when I'm in the class that I'm the boss but in any other situation he doesn't see that so he wants to try and play his game in whatever way he can.

Research on teacher-(male)pupil strategies have discussed such behaviours as 'deviant' (Furlong, 1985) or representative of anti-school cultures (Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970; Ball, 1981). More recent work has suggested that anti-school behaviours, carried out by boys, should not be viewed solely in the light of teacher-(male)pupil power struggles but may also be related to processes involved in constructions of masculine identities (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1995a; Sewell, 1997). Also, teacher-(male)pupil struggles do not take place in isolation from broader contexts of power; for example, the language used by Terry Blake to describe Shane's actions and his own responses drew on concepts associated with male hegemony, such as adventurousness, competitiveness, assertiveness and control (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997). Feminist post-structuralists have argued that language and power are intertwined and, in Western society, inscribed by patriarchy (Weedon, 1987; Skeggs, 1991b; Jackson, 1992; Ramazanoglu, 1993). So, whilst on one level Terry Blake's comments regarding Shane's contestation of his (teacher) authority can be read as a description of teacher-pupil relations, on another they can be interpreted as part of the process of normalisation of masculinity through the regulative practice of accepting and rejecting certain forms of *gendered* pupil behaviour.

As a general point, the discussion in the case study chapters of Benwood Primary have not placed any particular significance on the fact that Terry Blake was that rare commodity, a man teacher of infant children. The reason for this being that Terry Blake's sex did not appear to be one of *the*

crucial aspects of his relationships with children, parents and colleagues although inevitably it had some impact. The reasons *why* this was the case, were explained by Terry sometime after the data for this present study had been collected. In a private conversation, some years later, Terry told me that he is gay and had spent a great deal of time considering aspects of masculinity. As a teacher, he was aware of the ways in which many men teachers used, what he saw as stereotypical, 'macho' behaviours in managing and controlling pupils and interacting with female colleagues and parents. At the time, he was not officially 'out' but was very conscious of wanting to demonstrate to pupils and to his colleagues that being 'a man' was not necessarily synonymous with self-aggrandisement and lack of care and concern for others.

However, there were incidents where a shared gender could influence the interpretation of relationships, as with the example just given of Terry Blake accepting Shane's actions and challenges to his teacher authority. Similar attention grabbing actions engaged in by one of the girls, Cheryl, resulted in her always being ignored. Terry Blake explained:

> With Cheryl, she breaks rules differently to the others (girls) . . . at breaktime she wandered into the junior end again and she told Mrs. X that she just wanted to offer her a crisp . . . In the classroom she never sits down when she should and, I used to ask her, and she'd have some reason like she was 'tidying up'. Now I just ignore her. *Field notes*

The different approaches used to tackle similar forms of challenging behaviours by Shane and Cheryl leads to a consideration of how teachers achieved the apparent opposite of what they set out to achieve through

encouraging pupil self-esteem. As the year progressed it became evident to teachers that it was Shane who would consistently attempt to bend, rather than always break, classroom rules, whilst John often seemed simply too tired to bother. To address this teachers attempted to work on Shane's self-esteem by involving him more centrally in classroom life with the result that he was constantly being singled out for attention:

> Terry Blake shows the book the children have made this week to them whilst they are sitting on the carpet. The book is called 'On Monday Afternoons' which is about their visits to the swimming baths. Two of the photographs on consecutive pages are of Shane accompanied by the text "Shane is getting ready to swim" and "Shane is putting his toe in the water". The teacher adds "I seem to remember you got into trouble for that!" Children laugh, including Shane. No other child appears either on their own or more than once in the book. *Field notes.*

> Mrs. Cooper (part-time teacher) reads 'The Enormous Crocodile' to the class. The children have enraptured expressions on their faces. She shows the illustrations to them and asks "Which one is the crocodile? Shane can you show us?" Shane smiles, stands up, comes across the carpet, points to the crocodile then roars, pretends to be the crocodile and runs up to other children to 'eat' them. When he eventually calms down, he sits down. No other child is asked to contribute throughout the story. *Field notes.*

These strategies may well have been building up Shane's self-esteem, however, the assumption that high self-esteem is inextricably linked with the conformist behaviours schools value is ignoring wider contexts. As Dorothy Rowe (1994) has argued:

> It's absolutely true that to survive you have to have something you think you're good at. But you can see this in schools where kids who don't achieve find they *are* good at getting away with things and not getting caught. To say that's not self-esteem as you define it, is just imposing white, middle-class values. (Rowe, quoted in Grant, 1994, p.23)

The real achievement for Shane was in being able to demonstrate to his peers that not only could he take on and outwit the teachers, but that they actively appeared to sanction his behaviours by giving him more attention. Even being caught in attempts to outmanoeuvre teachers added to his self-esteem because it was important, as a 'lad' to be seen by his mates as having attracted attention to himself. As Campbell (1993) has argued, being caught and prosecuted, particularly if it involved a court appearance, was not seen as failure but added to the individual lad's status amongst the others:

> . . . another public appearance where what mattered to them was not that their behaviour was perceived as *wrong* but that it was seen as important. (Campbell, 1993, p.268)

The constant challenging behaviour of Shane towards teacher authority earned him a significant amount of teacher attention, and thereby the attention of the other boys. Attempts by teachers to encourage conformity

through developing his self-esteem placed him even more centrally in the spotlight. Indeed, Shane's aim of being 'first boss' appeared to be enabled by these actions which pointed to the contradiction between the intended and actual aims of the teachers as a source of critical incidents. As will be shown in the next section Shane was able to utilise teachers' attempts to promote his self-esteem in securing his 'first boss' place amongst the other boys.

Boys' Relationships With Each Other

A Boy Amongst Boys

Hegemonic masculinity does not reside within individual persona but is an 'ideal' construction which few can actually achieve. The specific form of hegemonic masculinity in the local culture revolved around being a 'real' (hard) man, and this inevitably demanded rigorous, exacting standards of the boys. The boys in Class B were engaged in running the risks involved with being in, what Connell (1995) has referred to as, the "frontline troops of patriarchy" (p. 79). A note of caution needs to be sounded here to avoid conflating the terminology Connell uses to define hegemonic masculinity with the particular situation in which it was manifested in the local culture. That is, it is not appropriate to 'read off' the idea that hegemonic (violent) modes of masculinity are specific to working-class masculinities. Such a perception fails to take into account the fine-grained and complex ways in which masculinities are constructed. Indeed as was evident in this case study the fact that some of the boys organised themselves in *relation* to the particularly dominant mode of masculinity practiced by John and Shane suggested that alternative forms of masculinities were operating around and within it.

Taking into account the above proviso, it can be argued that as the 'hard man' mode of hegemonic masculinity centred around violence, aggression and competitiveness, then struggles to construct and negotiate one's individual male identity within this frame involved constant confrontations and challenges *between* men/boys. This positioning in a masculine hierarchy can be shown through an exploration of the interpersonal relationships of the boys in Class B.

Shane's success in outmanoeuvring the authority of the teacher was made evident when others would join in with a situation which he initiated. The boys in Class B did not constitute a gang as defined in the literature (Cloward & Ohlin. 1960; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Miller, 1982; Goldstein, 1994). Also, there is no one set of characteristics associated with being a gang leader (Patrick, 1973), but one esteemed study has argued that "The leader is usually . . . the best organizer and planner of delinquent activities" (Haskell & Yablonsky, 1974, p. 174). On this basis, the following incident demonstrates Shane's successful abilities in positioning himself as 'first boss':

> Terry Blake is carrying out a maths activity on the carpet with the whole class. They are sitting around in a semi-circle with a number of shapes on the carpet in front of them. Terry Blake describes a shape and the children have to decide which one it is. He asks Shane to start and say the name of the shape he has just described. He does this correctly. Terry Blake then describes a second shape and asks the children to put up their hands if they know which one it is. Several children put up their hands but Shane crawls to the middle of the carpet and points to the one

Terry has described. The teacher says "No Shane, you've had a turn". A few minutes later he says "No, Shane, Gary (who has joined in the attempt) . . . I've said move back". He describes another shape and again Shane moves and points to it. This time Terry Blake ignores him and asks Bethany for the answer. Before she can say anything Gary shouts out "It's a triangle!" The teacher says, "Gary, have you changed your name to Bethany?" He then asks Charmain to choose a shape to describe. John and Matt both start to shout out a description of one of the shapes. Terry Blake says "No, I've asked Charmain". *Field notes.*

What happened here was Shane was given the privilege of starting the game (to develop his self-esteem), but he then attempted to hold onto centre stage. When Gary started to join in, Shane moved away and simply acted as observer having 'proved' that the teacher was prepared to allow him to contravene his instructions. When Gary, and then John and Matt, attempted to mimic Shane's initial success they were immediately curtailed. At this point, Shane decided to rejoin the game but to alter his strategy:

> The teacher has turned to deal with a message that has been brought in. Shane does press ups on the floor behind the teacher's back. Martin joins in by demonstrating karate kicks but Terry Blake sees him and tells him to sit down. *Field notes*

The carpet has been cleared of the shapes as it is coming up to lunchtime. The children are sent to wash their hands and

are being sent out according to the month of their birth. Shane attempts to go out on the first month Terry Blake calls out. He walks past Terry smiling at him. Terry realises what he is doing and tells him to sit back on the carpet. Shane repeats the action on the second month Terry calls out, which again isn't his birthday month. Terry lets him go. Matt and Luke attempt to join him. Terry Blake realises immediately and tells them they will be the last to leave.

Field notes

Some studies have found a hierarchical structure to the gangs in some communities with boys progressing from 'toddler' gangs through to 'heavy' teams (Kobrin, 1962; Patrick, 1973). Certainly the behaviours of Shane and John in seeking 'first boss' position, and the willingness of the other boys to participate in subversive classroom activities, suggested their actions were in keeping with those of the 'lads'. As such, competing with each other to show who had the abilities to outmanoeuvre the authority of the teacher was not the sole means through which the boys negotiated their place in the hierarchy or their masculine relationships with each other.

The Role of Humour

Whilst the 'lads' went to great lengths to demonstrate their individual skills at undermining police authority, many of their activities were generated as the result of collective practices so establishing a shared basis was equally important; that is, the 'lads' would 'hang out' and have a laugh together (Campbell, 1993). A significant feature of the studies of working-class masculinities is the importance of humour to 'macho' forms of masculinity (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Sewell,

1997). Indeed, as Kehily and Nayak (1997) have argued, (heterosexual) masculinities are regulated through humour. Their research was undertaken with working-class secondary school boys and, therefore, the actual practices differ but the principles underpinning the humour remain the same. Kehily and Nayak (1997) note that a common style of interaction was the elaborate use of game-play, incorporating ritualised verbal and physical assaults. This meant language and physicality was used in competitive ways "where the 'game' became the arena for competing masculinities" (p.71). The 'rough-and-tumble' forms of play boys of all ages have been found to engage in (Humphries & Smith, 1984) were evident and were labelled by the boys themselves as 'fun fights'.

The favoured verbal game-play was 'telling the teacher'. This was where a boy would attempt to get another into trouble by 'telling':

> Dean and Bobby are sitting next to each other during a wet lunch time watching a *Ninja Turtles* video. They are fun fighting. Dean starts to grab at Bobby's legs and tickling his neck. Bobby pushes him and shouts out "Miss, Miss, he's hitting me!" The teacher responds "Oh Dean! Stop that now!" Both boys laugh and turn their attention back to the video. *Field notes*

> Adam, Matt and Shane are doing their maths work in the maths corner which is transformed into a bookshop complete with money till. They have been told to tidy up. They come out of the bookshop smiling and walk past me. Shane turns back and says "He's (Adam) pinched some money . . ." All three laugh and I ask Adam to show me

what's in his pockets. He attempts to take the money out by hiding it in his hand, then passing it behind his back and dropping it on the floor. All the time all three are laughing. Adam says "Fair cop!" and the three walk away. *Field notes*

'Telling the teacher' as a form of humour and 'fun fighting' offered a means through which the boys could establish bonds with each other, and this enabled the kind of collective practices towards authority discussed earlier. At the same time, the boys did not always get on together and occasionally, unlike older boys in the school, the teacher's authority would be sought.

Inter-Group Conflict

As Phillips (1993) has said, there has been a tendency for feminists to ignore the fact that boys are different at ages five and twelve and, therefore, critical periods of masculine development have been ignored. For example, although Shane was undoubtedly the most enthusiastic 'apprentice lad' he was only six years old. His struggle to construct a masculine identity as 'first boss' sometimes appeared to overwhelm him and he would call on Terry Blake for support. Observations of what happened between boys after the class teacher had been asked to intervene suggested that the boy whose behaviour had been complained about always made some retaliatory gesture as in the following episode:

John takes one of Gary's words he is using to make a sentence. Gary crosses the room and tells Terry Blake. Terry turns and shouts to John that he must give Gary his word back, which he does. Gary sits back at the desk. John watches Terry Blake and, when he is involved with another

child, snatches Gary's pencil and throws it on the floor. *Field notes*

These attempts to have the final say were common, and generally the boys appeared not to harbour resentments. Terry Blake was aware that the boys did not value his way of dealing with their complaints:

> Terry Blake: I think there's a problem in getting the children, the boys in particular, to do as they're told. When they come to me and say so-and-so has hit them they expect me to hit the child who hit them . . . they see it as being unfair if I don't. So if I don't sort it out the way they want they'll sort it out themselves.

With Shane retribution was far more protracted and vicious. As was said earlier, the research into gang leaders has identified different characteristics. Some research has found that gang leaders have to have the ability to get on with people (Haskell & Yablonsky, 1974; Short, 1990), whilst others have noted the physical and verbal aggression of the leader (Patrick, 1973). The insights provided by recent research into masculinities enables greater understandings of these findings. The 'hard man' form of hegemonic masculinity in the Wickon community was inscribed with violence and aggression and, hence, it was more likely that leaders would draw on these to assert and retain their position. Shane, in his securing of 'first boss' position, not only used similar forms of violent behaviours but, importantly, kept up a sustained attack which drew in other boys in the group. The following incident took place over the course of an afternoon but its effects were more far reaching:

Shane and Dean have been close friends for several days. This morning, at carpet time, Dean came in and Shane grabbed his legs. Dean fell down on top of Shane and they were both laughing. (After lunch) Shane comes into the classroom looking very upset and goes immediately to Terry Blake saying "Dean's hit me with a stick". Terry Blake tells him to sit down on the carpet and if he has something to say he must put his hand up. Shane throws himself onto the carpet at Terry Blake's feet and puts his hand up. Terry listens to Shane's story and then asks Dean for his. After they had finished, Terry said, "I don't think either of you are being very nice to each other . . . now sit down". Shane turns and goes across the carpet to sit with John. After Terry has taken the register Shane shouts out "Dean has got his sweatshirt on back to front!" Several of the children laugh. Dean looks embarrassed but says nothing. Terry says, "Perhaps he wants to wear it like that". As the children move to their activities Dean pulls off his sweatshirt and puts it back on the right way. *Field notes.*

(Later that afternoon). Terry Blake observes Shane hitting Dean in the face. They are both in the same group and have been sent to the home corner. Shane is dressed in a long coat and is playing a 'man' "wiv me tabs and me New-key Broon (drink) doen the Shambles" (street in Oldchester famous for its nightlife and as a rendezvous for young people). Dean has been playing with the jigsaws and Shane had approached him and hit him. Terry calls Shane over to him

and asks why he is hitting Dean. Shane says his hand had 'slipped'. Shane is sent back to the home corner. *Field notes*

(Later again). Dean is standing near the box of bricks. Shane comes up behind him and pushes him roughly to the floor. Terry Blake turns at the noise and, before he can say anything, Shane says, "I'm only playing". Terry Blake asks "Does Dean know you're playing?" In response Dean stands up smiling which implies that what Shane has said is true. *Field notes*

The children have been told to tidy away. Dean is kneeling on the carpet playing with the cars. Shane walks past him, puts his hand on the back of his head and forces his face down into the carpet. He quickly walks away. Dean looks up, rubs his chin and stares at Shane but says nothing. *Field notes*

Having set up a situation in which Shane punished Dean persistently over the course of an afternoon, he built upon this over the next few days by isolating Dean from other boys who seemed to be offering any form of friendship to Dean. For example, Bobby was helping Dean with his maths and Shane said, "Man, man come over here . . . this is real hard work, not easy-peasy stuff like that." As suggested here, the main strategy used by Shane was that of ridicule. By ridiculing Dean, as in the comment about the sweatshirt, Shane implied that anyone who hung around with him was also ridiculous. Throughout all this Dean made no attempt to defend himself. Within days other boys had joined in the attacks, justifying their actions on the basis of Shane's alleged mistreatment by Dean. For

example, a few days after that afternoon Terry Blake told Dean off for copying his maths work into his weather diary. Adam told me that he, Gary and Martin had told Dean to do it:

CS: Why did you do that?

Adam: Because we wanted him to get wronged by the teacher.

CS: Why? What had he done?

Adam: (shrugs) We think he hit someone. Shane it was.

This section has attempted to outline the ways in which the boys negotiated their masculine identity within the classroom culture. Similar to the 'lads', it appeared they needed to demonstrate both individuality as well as group cohesion, and their effectiveness at this secured a place in the male hierarchy, albeit at various levels in relation to the 'boss'.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the ways in which masculine identities were constructed, negotiated and re-constructed by the infant boys in the school setting. The knowledge and awareness the boys brought into school with them of the hegemonic masculinity in the local culture appeared to inform their own behaviours and relationships. Where the police provided a focus for anti-authority activities for the 'lads', an awareness of the control/discipline aspect of the teaching role partly informed the boys' relationships with their teachers. In fact, shortly

after the end of the observation period Shane and John had made their first attempt at 'getting one over' the police. Terry Blake said that to his knowledge what had happened was that John and Shane had been caught by the police after being seen removing a steering wheel from a car. According to an older boy, they had tried to drive it but neither of them could get their feet on the pedals! Further attempts with one steering and one operating the pedals had also failed, so, rather than go away empty-handed (as reported by Shane at 'news time'), they had taken the steering wheel off, even though they knew they had been seen by a police patrol.

It has also been shown that the process of normalising masculinity takes place around and within a framework of discourses which the boys drew from and were located within. However, the 'grid of possibilities' (Skeggs, 1991a) offered by this framework was itself constructed through power/knowledge positions (Heath, 1982). The available discourses had differing relationships to power, so the discourse on *being a boy* drew on and incorporated greater access to power than discourses on *childhood, or* being a *school pupil ;* therefore, discourses on the former were much more powerful (influential).

This research took place with teachers who had undertaken their initial teacher education (ITT) courses prior to the introduction of the National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training. Some of these teachers may have undertaken their training during the 1980s when the criteria laid down by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education for the selection and training of student teachers included references to gender and 'race' issues. These teachers might be expected to have some knowledge and understanding of the insidious nature of sexism and racism in school processes. It would seem from the teachers' attitudes and behaviours at Benwood Primary that this was not the case. Changes to the programmes

of ITT courses since the 1980s have meant that increasingly less time is given to matters of social justice (Sikes, 1993; Cole, Hill & Shan, 1997). The technician approach to ITT means that it is increasingly unlikely that teachers will be in a position to recognise the influence of different discourses on both their own and their pupils' attitudes and behaviours. For example, the result of teachers' approaches to negative classroom behaviour was to promote self-esteem which had the unintended consequence of confirming and giving recognition to the 'laddish' behaviours many of the boys were attempting to emulate or at least demonstrate some relationship to.

So far the case study chapters have considered the impact the hegemonic masculinity of the local culture had on the organization and management practices of the school which, in turn, shaped the *gender regime* . Particular attention was given to the dominant mode of masculinity at Benwood Primary which reflected the competitive, aggressive, intimidatory pattern of masculinity found outside the school gates. This chapter has explored the ways in which the boys constructed and re-constructed public masculine identities through negotiating with and/or challenging dominant modes of masculinity. The emphasis has been on those boys who were part of Connell's (1995) 'frontline troops', and it needs to be reiterated that there were boys in the class like Bobby, Dean, Sean, Adam, Martin and Robert who appeared to join in with the activities of the more forceful, challenging boys because it could have been potentially more personally damaging *not* to have colluded. Indeed, in much of the autobiographical literature written by men on masculinities writers recall the fear they felt at school of being accused of being a 'poofter', 'wimp', or 'a girl' (White, 1989; Cohen, 1990; Jackson, 1990). At the same time it is important to emphasise two important points: that violent modes of

dominant masculinities are not the 'preserve' of working-class male practices and indeed the responses of boys like Bobby, Sean, etc. indicate that alternative, if not resistant, patterns of masculinities are often operating within a more explicitly evident hegemonic framework. Also, the situation at Benwood in terms of the articulation of these differing modes of masculinities were particular to this school site and cannot be generalised to other primary schools located in similar economically situated areas.

A part of demonstrating masculinity is, as implied in this final part of the discussion, rejecting the feminine. An important element in hegemonic masculinity is that of heterosexuality, and it is this aspect of the 'apprentice lad' mode of masculinity which forms the discussion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

INFANT BOYS: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The inner city disorders of the early 1990s attracted a great deal of media publicity and drew attention to the kinds of circumstances people living in economically deprived areas had to endure. It was made evident in media reports that the main source of tension was between young men and the police. The ways in which this tension was manifested in the Wickon area of Oldchester revolved around the 'lads' engaging with the police in high speed car chases, setting cars alight and vandalising property in the presence of the local constabulary. The majority of these activities took place in the vicinity where the 'lads' lived and, as a result, the victims of these actions were women, children and old people. In one 'joy-riding' (sic) event a six month old baby in a pram was driven into and killed. Partly as a result of the publicity highlighting the circumstances against which women in places like Wickon were having to struggle, studies were undertaken looking at the types of masculinities in which young men were immersed (Wallace, 1992; Campbell, 1993; Phillips, 1993). Reference was made at the beginning of Chapter 4 to the vulnerability of young women in the area who were subjected to attacks on their homes and threats of sexual violence by the 'lads':

> You're frightened to go up the top (Wickon Road) for a bus, and it's not just at night either, because all the lads are there, shouting at you and calling you names like a slag. It's really bad. My mate got jumped on and they were lifting her skirt

> and everything, and trying to put love bites on her, and nobody helped either. They make you sick. (Female, aged 17). (Wallace, 1992, p. 18).

The intention in this chapter is to consider the extent to which infant boys at Benwood Primary School engaged with issues related to (hetero)sexuality, particularly with regard to sexual violence. Whilst the majority of research on sexuality/sexual harassment has focused on the secondary sector, there is evidence of sexually harassing behaviours occurring in primary schooling (Clarricoates, 1987; Troyna & Hatcher, 1992; Connolly, 1995a; Redman, 1996). It is fair to say that, until recently, there has been a tendency in much of the research on sexual harassment to imply that *all* boys/men actively *practise* exploitative and subordinating strategies at *all* times, in *all* circumstances, in *all* their relationships with girls/women (Mahony, 1985; Herbert, 1989; Larkin, 1994). However, recent research into masculinities has enabled a move away from this generalist and universalist notion towards one which recognises that individuals occupy a range of subject positions within different discourses and, as such, boys/men engage with the concept of, and practices associated with, sexual harassment in different ways, at different times and on different levels (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Sewell, 1997; Connolly, 1998a).

It was shown in the previous chapter how the boys constructed, negotiated and re-constructed their masculinities in relation to the hegemonic masculinity of the local culture and that of the school. As hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to women and to various subordinated masculinities, a fundamental part of the process of acquiring masculine identities for the boys at Benwood Primary was their

interactions with girls and women in the school. An important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual, but how and when infant boys begin to recognise and draw on gender-power dynamics and learn about 'othering' females has yet to be explored.

This chapter considers when and how boys at Benwood Primary drew upon sexually harassing behaviours, and to do so also involves identifying when and with whom they did *not*. A point to note is that sexualised behaviours are taken as those which range from sexual innuendo to unwarranted physical contact (Ramazanoglu, 1987). The discussion will focus on the boys' relationships with three different groups of females they encountered on a daily basis in the school: those with 'unsignificant others' (adult women); those with authority figures (female teachers); and those with the girls in the class.

Infant Boys and 'Unsignificant Others'.

The term 'unsignificant others' is not intended as derisory, but is employed here to describe that group of females with whom the pupils at Benwood Primary had no relationship with other than that of female adult to child. The adult females in this group included lunchtime assistants, student teachers, supply teachers, nursery trainees and the occasional female parent who accompanied the class to the swimming baths. It was rare for mothers to provide assistance in the classroom on any consistent basis. Being away from their homes on a regular basis, and leaving them unattended exposed them to the likelihood of vandalism and burglary (Campbell, 1993). This meant that the only opportunities available to observe the children in Class B with parents was on the weekly visit to the swimming baths when two mothers and one elder sister helped out.

These observations, together with those of Mrs. Jones (a 0.2 teacher supporting the other Year 2 teacher), Mrs. Cooper (a 0.5 teacher), Ms Lewis (second year BEd student), Suzie Jenks (nursery nurse trainee) and my own experiences of teaching the class, initially suggested that the boys were all too familiar with sexually subordinating behaviours.

It has to be said that all the children in the class adopted rebellious behaviours whenever an unfamiliar teacher took them, but the boys adopted different approaches which would have been less effective if used by the girls. The majority of the boys' actions drew upon violence and verbal aggression:

> At the end of a session, Mrs. Jones (0.2 teacher) says to Rick, "You've worked really well today". Rick responds with "I'll smash your head in." *Field notes*

> Shane is in the home corner with Bethany, Matt and Michelle. He picks up a pencil, puts it in his mouth and pretends to smoke. He realised Bethany and I are watching him. He 'stubs out' his 'cigarette' on the back of his hand. He bares his teeth at us as he is doing this. *Field notes*

> Ms. Lewis (student teacher) attempts to read *Prince Cinders* to a group of children. Gary has tantrums, rolls on the floor and mimics her. He then hits his fist on the floor whilst continually glancing up at her. *Field notes*

In addition, many of the boys would use confrontational/sexualised bodily postures such as standing with legs apart, hands on hips and pelvis

thrust forward. Conversations would be held in front of supply and part-time teachers where they would refer to 'she' or 'her'. Some of the behaviours adopted by the boys appeared to be an attempt to show adult women that they, as males, 'knew' what role women had to play in their lives; that is to 'look after' them. Time and again, incidents were recorded when boys who had earlier been uncooperative, if not hostile in the ways given above, would approach an adult female and demand to have their shoes or clothing fastened. On the occasions when supply teachers or lunchtime assistants pointed out that they were capable of doing it for themselves, they would laugh, turn away and fasten the shoelace, zip or buckle themselves.

There is a danger here of simply 'reading off' the aggressive and subordinating posturing of the boys as part of the patriarchal rules and regulations they were learning. However, it has to be kept in mind that the composition of staff in the primary sector meant that there was no opportunity to observe boys with male supply teachers, male student teachers or male lunchtime assistants. It could have been the case that the class, recognising that they were being taught by someone who had less knowledge and experience of them, would simply push against everyday rules and boundaries (Measor *et al.*, 1996) and use more 'extreme' behaviours which, in the case of the boys, might be interpreted as sexualised/violent. It may be that they would adopt similar behaviours with part-time male teachers. What is important is to place such actions in a broader context, and an important part of this was to identify instances when boys did *not* act in sexually threatening or demeaning ways.

Infant Boys and Female Teachers

Through observing and talking to the full-time female members of staff, it seemed that sexually threatening behaviours, or indeed any form of sexual harassment, was not something they had encountered in their relationships with any of the boys. It might be argued that the absence of sexualised aggressive behaviours from the boys might have been due to their young age, and because the female teacher was seen as a 'mother substitute', but given that other adult females in the school who were also acting in *loco parentis* were experiencing what seemed to be subordinating attitudes means that this is not a viable conclusion.

One afternoon a critical incident took place with a female part-time teacher, Mrs. Cooper, which helped to shed light on possible perceived differences between the roles and relationships the children had with full-time teachers and other adults in the school. The incident suggested that the circumstances in which female teachers avoided experiencing some of the more violent/sexualised actions of the boys centred around the interaction of three factors: how familiar the teacher was as a member of the school staff; the age of the children they had responsibility for teaching; and the role of the teacher as representative of authority. The incident occurred one afternoon when the class teacher, Terry Blake, had to attend a meeting regarding the Key Stage 1 testing.

Mrs. Cooper was a part-time teacher who mainly worked with the older children at Benwood Primary. She had only recently returned to work at the school where, before having her children, she had been a full-time member of staff. The afternoon began with the children exercising their usual techniques when a 'new' teacher took them. Pencils were thrown

around the room, constant requests were made to go the toilet and the teacher's response ignored, and John and Shane embarked upon the series of disruptive strategies particular to the boys, such as adopting threatening bodily stances and verbal insults. For example, Mrs. Cooper's request for John to sit down was greeted with "Pooh-ee, off-ee". Other boys started to join in by 'squaring up' to each other and seeming to start a fight, which would inevitably lead to several skirmishes taking place. Mrs. Cooper pre-empted an escalation in the already disruptive situation by pointing to Shane and saying "I know your brothers Doug and Steve". This successfully stopped him in his tracks and, as a consequence, all the other boys too. Mrs. Cooper quickly added that she'd like them all to sit down so she could find out the names of the younger brothers and sisters (that is, the pupils in the class) of the children she had taught a few years ago before she had left to have a baby. She reminded them that she had only recently come back to work at the school now that her own children were older, and they probably did not know her because she usually taught the 'big' children and they had not started school when she left. The class immediately became quieter and sat down around her. Mrs. Cooper then preceded to point at each child in turn asking for their surnames, from which she identified their older siblings and cousins. For the rest of the afternoon they treated her in exactly the same way as they did Terry Blake and Mrs. Smith, the other Year 2 class teacher.

The significance of the children being familiar with the teacher was noted by several teachers. On one occasion I was on playground duty with Terry Blake when two junior boys ran out of the school. They stood some distance away jeering. Terry Blake's insistent, angry demands that they return to the school grounds immediately brought sneers from many of the older boys and laughter generally from the children in the

playground. He abandoned his attempts to get them to return to the school premises, and later said that it was not the first time something like that had happened, but he could do nothing as he had never taught the boys and, because of this, they would not take any notice of anything he said. Similarly, when negotiating access to the school the then headteacher said that it would not be possible to work with Year 6 as it was policy to have two specific teachers associated with that class (the male acting deputy headteacher and a female teacher who had worked in the school for many years). This way if one teacher was absent the other could take over as the children would not accept anyone else. The argument put forward by the headteacher was that the teachers in the school were one of the few 'constants' the children had, and they became distressed, to the point of aggression and often violent, if they did not know the teacher. This perhaps partially explains why the children in Class B would respond to the status of a teacher of older children. Although they did not have relationships with the teachers themselves, they 'knew' of them because they had heard their older family members talk about them. In interviews with the children a question was asked about which teachers they liked, and invariably they would give the name of their reception class teacher (who had also been their Year 1 teacher) followed by the name of a teacher in the upper school who was teaching or had taught one of their older siblings or cousins.

Intertwined with the familiarity of the teacher, and the status the children seemed to afford to the teaching of older children was the position the teacher occupied as a representative of an authority structure. It was shown in Chapter 4 how the school's relationship with parents was based partly on fear/vulnerability and partly on maternalism/paternalism, where the role of the school as representative of authority was utilised. In

some ways teachers, as official representatives of an official authority structure, seemed to occupy an analogous position to the one the police had with the wider community, particularly with the 14-19 male youths. So, in the same way that the 14-19-year-olds did not want to appear to conform to, and certainly not collude with the police and police instructions (Wallace, 1992; Campbell, 1993), the children in general, but the boys in particular, would attempt to 'get one over' the teacher by breaking a rule (see Chapter 5). Observations in the classroom showed that boys dealt with relationship tensions amongst themselves and if one did appeal to the teacher then retribution was swift, whereas girls were more likely to approach the teacher and request help. The fact that this was not always forthcoming will be shown later.

What appeared then to be of greater significance than the gender of the teacher was their position as an authority figure against which the boys could construct and re-construct masculine identities for themselves within their immediate peer group. As was shown in Chapter 5, for John and Shane the competition was for 'first boss' position. Although the other boys seemed somewhat indifferent to their constant struggles to achieve this position, they would join in with the bids these two made to successfully break rules or 'get one over' the class teacher. What became apparent as the year progressed was that 'getting one over' any teacher was not enough. As Terry Blake became more familiar with the activities of John and Shane, he was frequently able to forestall many of their subversive activities. So attempts any of the boys made to prove themselves as one of the 'lads' called for ever-increasing sophistication in the ways of getting around the rules and regulations of the classroom (Goodwin, 1991; Archer, 1994). To demonstrate these skills effectively required a constant, in the form of a class teacher, against and around

whom the boys could attempt their manoeuvres. As such it was the *authority* that the teacher represented which was the focus rather than the teacher as a gendered being.

Observations of the boys in Class B with myself and other adult females they encountered in school seemed to suggest that they were aware of sexually subordinating/violent strategies they could use against women, yet this contrasted with the apparent de-gendered relationship they had with full-time female teachers. A clearer insight into how and with whom sexually harassing behaviour was developing amongst the boys was gleaned through their changing relationships with the girls in the class.

Infant Boys and Girl/Friends

Many of the girls and boys in Class B had known each other from a very young age, either because they lived in the same street or their parents were friends or they were related. This meant several cross-gender friendships had been established and, although rarely evidenced in school time, these children continued to play together outside school. At the same time, there was evidence of a growing awareness of girls as 'girlfriends' but, with the exceptions of Shane and John, most of the boys seemed to have different notions of what a 'girlfriend' was:

CS: So what about girlfriends?

Sean: Donna!

John: Worr! I fancy 'er!

CS: What does it mean if you have a girlfriend?

John: You just fancy 'em and kiss 'em and that.

CS: Robert, have you got a girlfriend?

Robert: I used to have - Donna.

Martin: She's chucked him in for . . .

Robert: (interrupts) She's chucked everyone . . .

Martin: She hasn't! She hasn't chucked me or Gary 'cause she told us this morning.

CS: What sorts of things do you do with Donna when she is your girlfriend?

Martin: Play with her in the playground.

CS: So what's nice about Donna? Why do you like her?

Robert: She keeps up with her work and her weather diary.

Martin: She doesn't tell on yer all the time . . .

Whilst a majority of the boys experienced confusion with the notion of 'girlfriends' and 'girls as friends' in terms of girls of their own age, as the year progressed there was a shift towards the use of sexualised

behaviours as a way of disturbing or shocking the girls. At the beginning of the year a feature of the boys' arguments or attempts to assert themselves over the girls was to make reference to bodily functions. For example, the most common form of insult was 'smelly arse'. Later, incidents began to occur when overt sexualised behaviours were adopted in the boys' interactions with the girls.

> The children are sitting on the carpet looking at books. There is a class book on 'Clothes' which Charmain is looking at. One of the pictures is of Sharon, Kylie and Lyndsay wearing swimming costumes. Tommy notices this and says to Charmain "They're being sexy", grins at her and makes kissing noises. *Field notes*

> Bethany is talking about her birthday cards to Charmain and Kylie. She looks across to the next desk and says to them "Look, Matt's being rude". Matt is making a masturbatory gesture. *Field notes*

> Katy, Lyndsay and Charmain are pretending to wash their dolls in the sink in the home corner. Tommy and Gary are playing nearby with the zoo animals. Tommy goes into the home corner but is chased out a few minutes later by Katy who says he was touching her doll's 'bottom' (pointing to the vagina). *Field notes*

One aspect of the incidents which seemed to be fairly typical was the consistent way in which the boys appeared to target Charmain. She had recently returned to the school after a long period of absence. Charmain

had been sexually abused by her father, and the family was being monitored by Social Services. As with many sexually abused children, Charmain exhibited sexual behaviours towards both adults and peers, and this may partly explain why she was often involved in the harassing behaviours of the boys.

There is an absence in the literature on primary schools regarding romantic/sexual relationships between children. The study by Clarricoates (1987) of four primary schools suggested there were no cross-sex friendships, whilst the studies by Pollard (1985) and Thorne (1993) make reference to the presence of romance relationships but do not explore them. Similarly, there is little published research on the topic of young children's sexuality at school (Best, 1983; Lloyd & Duveen, 1992). It may be, as Best (1983) and Lloyd & Duveen (1992) have argued, that children are aware of the unease their sexuality generates and, as a consequence, keep it *sub rosa*. However, despite the paucity of information on young children's romantic/sexual relationships at school, there is some evidence to demonstrate the function these alliances serve for boys.

In his research into children's peer cultures, Richard Hatcher (1994) notes that romance relationships occurred amongst high status groups at primary school, and these alliances reinforced individual and group status. A similar conclusion was reached by Peter Redman (1996) in his exploration of heterosexual masculinities in boys in Years 5 and 6. Redman argues that boys at the 'top end' of primary school occupy a high status in the hierarchical organisation, and this has implications for the re-construction of masculine identities:

> Practising for heterosexuality is arguably one way in which boys' collectively explore the newly available forms of authority and autonomy conferred by their position at the 'top of the school', and construct for themselves new forms of older child identity that negotiate and made sense of their new position within school structures. (Redman, 1996, p. 178)

Although the boys in Class B were at the lower end of the hierarchy in respect of school organisation, the principle Redman is making is applicable to their situation. The wrangling between John and Shane for 'first boss' position involved them in utilising attitudes and behaviours of the hegemonic masculinity of the 'lads; that is, they were constantly seeking out ways in which they could construct for themselves new forms of 'older' male identity. A significant aspect of any form of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality, and this was particularly pronounced in that mode of masculinity acted out by the 'lads'. It is likely that the use of sexualised/violent attitudes and behaviours the boys began to show towards the girls were simply a part of the *process* of working out their own masculine identities within their male peer group. This idea can be explained more fully by considering when sexualised/violent behaviours towards girls began to replace the 'bodily function' insults.

In February, Suzie Jenks began her student nursery-nurse placement with Class B. She was seventeen years of age and her physical appearance was in keeping with the current fashion. Although her clothes suggested she was more affluent than the female teenagers living in Wickon, Suzie could easily have been a girlfriend of one of the 'lads'. At this point in the school year John was beginning to lose out to Shane in the wrestling over the

'first boss' position. By the end of the second week of her placement it seemed that Suzie was being drawn into their conflict:

> On the way to assembly Shane holds Suzie's hand. On seeing this, John grabs her other hand. In assembly Shane stares across at Suzie and keeps smiling at her. She smiles back. *Field notes*

> On the way out of the classroom as the children go outside for morning break Shane gives Suzie a hug round her neck and blows a kiss at her cheek. *Field notes*

> At storytime Shane sits on the carpet near the chair Suzie is sitting on. He puts his arms around her legs. *Field notes*

This was unusual behaviour in that neither I nor Terry Blake had observed Shane acting in this way with any other female, although she was the only female teenager we had the opportunity of seeing him with. Terry commented in the first week of Suzie's placement that he had noticed John attempting to hold her hand, and he thought that John like Shane, was endeavouring to 'chat her up'. It might well be that for John and Shane acquiring a 'girlfriend' who could easily be a girlfriend of one of the 'lads' was a means by which they could draw on an 'older' masculine identity and, thereby, secure a higher status amongst the other boys.

Shane's non-aggressive, even 'affectionate' attitudes towards Suzie did not prevent him adopting more violent behaviours towards her which were reminiscent of those reported by young females in Wickon of the 'lads' (Wallace, 1992):

> At the end of the session Terry Blake tells Dean off for trying to hit Kylie. Shane stares across at Suzie and, when he catches her eye, smiles then makes a fist with one hand and smacks into the palm of his other hand. *Field notes.*

However, the unco-operative, frequently hostile, behaviour of John and Shane towards other adult females was not something Suzie experienced in her management of them. Although she noted that she did have difficulties in managing a couple of the boys, she had not had any problems with Shane and John. The hand-holding, leg-touching and hugging she ascribed to 'natural affection' in the same way that the nursery teacher in Walkerdine's (1990) study 'read' the sexualised discourse of two young boys as harmless. Certainly, when Suzie's placement reached an end the upsurge in sexualised/violent behaviours towards the girls in the class suggested that heterosexuality was beginning to take its place as another avenue through which the boys could attempt to outmanoeuvre each other in the process of 'doing' masculinity.

When the incidents, such as those described earlier, began the girls would report them to teachers. However, the approach adopted by the school and teachers to do with issues of control helped to establish the idea that sexual harassment was somehow acceptable because it was not potentially disruptive. As discussed in Chapter 4, teachers adopted a policy of 'outside behaviour' for behaviours they could not accept but felt they could not challenge. Those behaviours which were not seen as significantly disruptive would be allowed to pass by, or in some cases, dismissed. All too frequently these were associated with a girl complaining about the actions of a boy:

John and Shane are in the toilet. Lyndsay tells Terry Blake that they are together in the same cubicle and they'd been trying to look over at her when she'd been to the toilet. Terry Blake ignores what she has said and tells her to sit down. *Field notes*

Luke pushes Kylie roughly onto her back on the floor and straddles her, sitting on her stomach. Kylie struggles free and reports what has happened to the teacher. Luke hovers behind her. The teacher ignores Kylie despite the fact that she repeats several times that "Luke pushed me over and hurt me". Luke smiles and walks away. *Field notes*

By the third term, many such incidents were going unreported by the girls. There is a substantial body of evidence which shows that schools, by failing to address boys' verbal and/or physical violence towards girls, make girls an easy target for boys who are flexing their male power muscles (Mahony, 1985; Kelly, 1989; Lees, 1993).

What appeared to be taking place over the course of the year was that the boys were developing socially, physically, conceptually etc., and their masculinities were constantly being constructed, negotiated and re-constructed. Children become aware at an early age of the gender *category* to which they belong (Kuhn *et al.*, 1978; Fagot, 1985): however, the *meaning* of their gender *identity* evolves more slowly through the negotiation of gender discourses and practices (Jordan, 1995). Interaction in the peer group is one way in which gender discourses and practices are negotiated and particularly significant is the playing out of confusions and ambiguities from the adult world in ways that make them familiar

(Moscovici, 1981; Corsaro, 1988). The question here is: on what sources were the children drawing regarding knowledge about gender? The official culture of the school was obviously one, and it has been outlined in Chapter 4 how the control strategies drew on the hegemonic masculinity of the local culture.

In addition to the school, other important sources were parents, the community and media images. In terms of parents and the community, it has been shown that there were markedly different gender scripts operating. The hegemonic masculinity of the local area leaned towards that of the violent male, which had implications for how women were perceived:

> Violent males . . . exaggerate, distort and glorify those (hegemonic masculine) behaviours and blend them into potent combinations. For example . . . rather than look down upon the feminine they might hold it in contempt and despise it; rather than consider women and children their inferior, they may regard them as less than human and more as objects and possessions to be used and discarded at will. (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, p. 121).

This understanding of violent hegemonic masculinity is identifiable in the comments made by those who lived and worked in the Wickon area, and are worth quoting at length. The comments of Mrs. Smith, a Year 2 class teacher at Benwood Primary, suggested that women in the locality were familiar with male violence and tried to minimise the harm that was being done to them in their relationships by laughing about it (Hanmer, 1996; Kelly & Radford, 1996):

> Mrs. Smith: There's one parent who, last time I had my sunglasses on asked me if I'd been hit. She knew I hadn't but she, and several of the mothers do it, felt that she could turn round and ask me if I've 'walked into a door' or 'slipped on a mat' in a jokey way.

The comments of Joe Caffrey, a former shipyard worker turned community worker in Wickon further recognises the position women are in *vis-a-vis* the men:

> We are seeing attacks on single parents just because they're vulnerable . . . It's just because they are available for attack. They don't have men to protect them from men. They don't have other networks, other men in their family, to be deterrents. It's not that these women are inadequate . . . it's just that they're vulnerable. (cited in Campbell, 1993, p. 172)

> These men live in a twilight world . . . They're lying around on the sofa in their boxer shorts, watching videos; they have their tea when it's put in front of them; then they go out TWOCing and burgling . . . The men won't go to their solicitors, they won't liaise with the housing department, they won't liaise with their kids' schools. It's the women who make the appointments, it's the women who call to cancel the men's appointments, it's the women who make the apologies. We have women who ring up saying the men want to know what's happening to their case . . . The reality is that children in this community do not grow up seeing men do any of the coping, caring or standing on their own

> two feet. (Lawyer involved in trials of male youths following the inner city disorders in Wickon, Sep., 1991; cited in Campbell, 1993, p.178)

Ironically, the idea fostered by the New Right in their moral crusade for 'traditional family values', that 'fatherless' families are the cause of male juvenile crime, was subverted in the Wickon area. There the majority of offenders were boys, typically with fathers and brothers who had criminal records (Campbell, 1995). Indeed, both John and Shane, who instigated a majority of the activities around 'tricking' the teacher or exploiting girls and adult women, were from notorious local families.

The children at Benwood Primary would also have gained information about gender relations from the media, particularly television and videos. A surprising number of children in Class B had access to satellite television. A possible reason for this was offered by one of the boys in Class B, Gary, who told me his family rented it from one shop on a month's free trial then sent it back and went to another shop for another free trial. Television viewing was a popular activity with all of the children. The most popular programmes with the boys were cartoons, such as *Ninja Turtles* and *The Simpsons*, on Sky television. The films and videos the boys watched often formed the basis of their play in the home corner or on the playground. Many of the films they reported seeing were certified for people of an older age group and presented violent and often terrifying images of masculinity; the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films with the menacing Freddy Kreuger character were popular, as were action movies starring Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Chuck Norris. As Miedzian (1992) has argued, the number of violent acts screened per hour is much less relevant than the fact that boys are being drawn into a "world

of endless conflicts settled with fistfights, swords, guns and hi-tech weapons of destruction" (p. 209).

Conclusion

It has been shown in this chapter how the violent hegemonic masculinity of the local culture, which was reflected in the management and control strategies of the school, had implications for the ways in which sexual harassment was dealt with. Observing the boys' relationships with the girls shift over the course of the year to incorporate sexualised/violent behaviours, I became aware of my own culpability and that of other adult women in the school in fostering the boys' knowledge and awareness of the power of such strategies. In the same way that the girls' requests for help from teachers after experiencing some boys' aggressive or intimidatory actions had gone unheeded, I and other adult women had ignored the boys' violent behaviours when personally confronted with them. Sexism remains deeply embedded at an ideological level, and adult women know what sexual harassment is and how best to protect ourselves. In keeping with research findings into sexual harassment and schooling, we tried to ignore it or pretend that it was not happening (De Lyon, 1989; Herbert, 1992). When I spoke to Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jones about the incidents recorded earlier in this chapter, each responded with comments which rationalised the behaviour of the boys and, in so doing, avoided addressing the personal unease it causes us as women. So they argued that "It's their age . . . they're trying out what they see their dads doing" and "It's what they see outside. What can you do?" The important issue here is that the incidents which could easily have been 'read off' as boys putting into operation their knowledge and awareness of patriarchal rules, was *my* understanding of such actions as a female researcher/part-

time teacher. A more appropriate perspective would be to see them as the actions of young boys who were in the *process* of constructing their masculinities within a specific site. This perspective therefore allows for the possibility of, and potential for, change.

The discussion in this chapter has attempted to demonstrate the factors which shape and enable young boys' knowledge and awareness of the effectiveness of heterosexual discourses in constructing masculine identities (Epstein, 1997; Connolly, 1998a). The most influential sources of masculinities, in the sense that they are the most immediate and most evident, are the hegemonic masculinities of the locale, the school and the media. An important point made in this chapter is that the various modes of masculinity available for the 6 to 7-year-old boys in Class B to draw on in constructing, negotiating and re-constructing masculine identities were extremely limited. It has also shown that for various boys in Class B there were differences in terms of the ways in which they engaged with the concept of, and practices associated with, sexually violent behaviours.

The case study chapters on Benwood Primary School have explored three areas which serve to illuminate the complex ways in which masculinities are constructed in school sites.

Firstly, consideration was given to how a particular dominant mode of masculinity had emerged in the school, shaped by broader ideologies of gender and social class, and the ways in which these were mediated through relationships between school, parents and the local culture. The impact of 'free market' educational policy was also argued to have contributed to the school's gender regime (in terms of the patterns of practices that construct various kinds of masculinity and femininity)

through the emphasis placed on 'partnership' between parents and schools. The assumption that parents in any one school's catchment area would want a closer involvement, and that parents and teachers could work effectively together, was taken as a given. Also, taking power away from LEAs and giving it to parents was not a simple transfer of responsibilities, as those parents who had little or no access to mechanisms of power were not in a strong position to be able to provide the necessary support to the school.

The second subject area to be considered was the ways in which infant boys constructed, negotiated and re-constructed masculine identities within the school setting. It was shown how the boys negotiated masculine identities through the discursive positions of being a *boy, white, child, school pupil* and a member of a particular social class.

The final area discussed was the extent to which the infant boys at Benwood engaged with issues related to the heterosexual aspect of hegemonic masculinity; an aspect which was both exaggerated and violent in the locally dominant mode of masculinity.

Although it should be emphasised that the findings of an ethnography of one primary school are not generalisable it is fair to say that certain causal processes may emerge which are identifiable in ethnographies of similar institutions. Whilst the case study of Benwood Primary and the one which follows of Deneway Primary were not intended to be comparative, there were certain factors that emerged common to both studies, specifically:

- the importance/significance of teachers' organisation and management practices;

- the significance of the changes to educational policy on a school's gender regime generated mainly through relationships with parents and the local community;

- the tension between being a *boy (girl)*and a *school pupil* in developing a masculine (or feminine) identity.

The following two chapters are the findings of the case study undertaken at Deneway Primary School.

CHAPTER 7

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND 'ORDINARY' BOYS

There has been a tendency in studies of masculinities and schooling to focus on "working-class, flamboyantly masculine" boys (Thorne, 1993, p.99) who, it is argued, resist dominant class structures (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979; Walker, 1988). The study of hegemonic masculinity at Benwood Primary School falls into this category. As Wolpe (1988) points out, there is little included in ethnographies of schooling about "the ordinary boy who goes through school doing minimal work, but not necessarily domineering or sexually harassing" (p.92). Also, and more specifically, it has been argued that hegemonic masculinity is not just heterosexual, but white and middle-class and that it is these aspects which need to be 'made strange' (Steedman, 1986; Reay, 1996). Researching white, middle-class hegemonic masculinity is, as Reay (1996) indicates, a far more challenging task than problematising the frequently pathologised masculinities of black and white working-class males.

The case study of Deneway Primary School provided an opportunity to explore the hegemonic masculinity of a school which served a predominantly white, middle-class area. Studies of white, working- and middle-class boys in secondary schools have referred to these 'ordinary' boys as 'ear 'oles' (Willis, 1977), 'Cyrils' (Connell *et al.* 1982), and 'Swots' (Connell, 1989; Stanley, 1989). These 'ordinary' boys could be considered as engaged in constructing *complicitous masculinities* (Connell, 1995). This term refers to those forms of masculinity which take advantage of the patriarchal dividend without actually being at the forefront; that is,

individual *(complicitous)* males can reap the benefits of patriarchy without "the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops" (Connell, 1995, p.79). As will be shown, the hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary facilitated complicitous modes of masculinity amongst the boys. Where the hegemonic masculinity of Benwood Primary was influenced by the violent modes of culturally exalted masculinity in the local community, the hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary leaned towards the 'accommodatory' properties of complicitous masculinities. Importantly, the point was made in Chapter 4 that the differing modes of masculinities offered in Connell's (1995) analysis should not be seen as contingent with a particular social class. So, in the same way that the violent form of dominant masculinity evident in the case study of Benwood Primary School should not be equated with working-class masculinities also the complicitous mode of masculinity which was dominant at Deneway Primary should not be seen as particular to middle-class patterns of masculinity. The significant point here is that both violent and complicitous forms of masculinities can be hegemonic (dominant) at different historical times, locations, cultures etc.

The intention in this chapter is to explore the hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary School through two key aspects; football and heterosexuality. Analysis of these two areas offers a means through which the boys negotiated their own masculine identities alongside the hegemonic masculinity of the school.

The first section will provide a brief description of the immediate vicinity of the school. This will be followed by a section which gives details of the research group. The chapter then moves on to consider the policy of Deneway Primary with regard to equal opportunities, and is followed by

an exploration of pedagogical practices and teacher attitudes. The significance of football in the construction of masculinities, and its function in the hegemonic masculinity of the school, will be the focus of the fourth section. Finally, the heterosexual nature of the hegemonic masculinity of the school and its apparent effects on the masculine identities of the boys will be discussed.

Deneway Primary School

The locale described in the case study of Benwood Primary School in many ways reflects the image of the North East of England as it is portrayed in the media. Since the disturbances of 1991, the media have returned consistently to the Wickon area each and every time conflicts emerge on inner city streets. Sociological studies of the inhabitants of the North East have also tended to focus on the economic deprivation of the area. The Goftons (1984) refer to "The Giro Cities of the North East . . . where the 1930s have never really gone away" (p. 280) and while Frank Coffield *et al.'s* (1986) study of young people growing up in the area acknowledges the 'vibrant culture' and 'rich networks of mutual support' which exist, these positive features can easily be forgotten when faced with the far more frequent references to economic deprivation. For example, Coffield and his colleagues say that "The results of a long period of persistent decline were to be seen all around" (p. 216) and note the local economy's 'entrenched deprivation', the 'dirty and dangerous' working conditions resulting in 'a marked concentration of health problems' and, that the number of pupils staying on at school is the 'lowest of all the English regions'. However, the prominence given by the media and sociological studies to the working-class population of the North East has presented a distorted image of the social class composition of the area.

Oldchester city has always had a large middle-class population. Whilst in the 1820s the shipyard workers lived to the west of Oldchester in such areas as Wickon, the shipbuilders, shipowners and other captains of industry lived to the north of the city in the affluent areas of Greenvale and Parkside. During the economic boom period of the 1970s and 1980s Oldchester expanded and new housing estates were built. To the north west of the city a large estate of moderately priced detached and semi-detached housing was developed called Deneway. Given its prime position on a direct metro-line route to the local airport seven miles away, as well as to the city centre and the central railway station, the estate attracted many young, professional families. As a result, Deneway Primary School was opened in 1989.

The school catered for children from Deneway estate but also served two neighbouring areas, only one of which was predominantly working-class. Deneway Primary school is Oldchester LEAs 'showpiece' school. As the School Handbook (1992) pointed out:

> The school is a new concept in its design . . . the teaching areas centre around a book garden which also serves as a library . . . there are four playgrounds plus a playing field surrounding the building . . . in the near future the already established wild garden area\stream will be adapted and developed . . . (p. 3).

There were approximately 350 children on the school role when the research took place, but these numbers were expected to rise especially when the nursery opened (see Chapter 3). There were fourteen teaching staff, three of whom were male; these were the headteacher and the Years

5 and 6 teachers. The market forces introduced into schools by the ERA 1988 has been used to spectacular effect by the young, entrepreneurial headteacher, Tom Kenning. The school is extremely well resourced, with much of the money being raised by parents. The school was, and continues to be, a central attraction for visitors to the area ranging from members of the Royal Family, overseas foreign dignitaries, members of parliament, LEA officials, staff from other schools inside and outside the authority and, on one occasion, a famous writer and speaker to launch the reading scheme he had developed. Unlike the area in which Benwood Primary was situated, this part of Oldchester has not attracted the attention of the media or been the subject of any sociological studies. Setting aside the fact that Deneway Primary can provide better resources than many schools, and has effectively risen to the challenge of market forces in education, it is the type of school which can be found in the middle-income suburbs of any city.

Class Y

The research at Deneway Primary School focused on Class Y which consisted of 27 children, 12 girls and 15 boys. The majority of the class were white, but three Japanese and one Asian pupil attended the school for some time over the course of the research. The intensive observation period took place in the Summer term, when the children were in Year 5 (9-10 year-olds), and further observations and interviews were held in the following Autumn term when the class was in Year 6. In Year 5, the class teacher, Philip Norris, had been a mature entrant who was in his first year of teaching (aged twenty-eight). In Year 6, the teacher was Bill Naismith, a younger man in his second year of teaching, who took up his appointment towards the latter part of the observation period. The girls

in Class Y will be discussed in the next chapter as the intention here is to explore the predominant mode of masculinity evident in the school, and to consider the ways in which the boys constructed, negotiated and re-constructed masculine identities in relation to it.

The Boys

A striking feature of the boys in Class Y was that they appeared to be an homogenous group, but not in the way that the infant boys at Benwood did. As was implied earlier, these boys exhibited those modes of masculinity which have been classified as 'conformist' (Hammersley & Turner, 1984; Brown, 1987). Whilst inevitably there were some tensions between some of the boys, as a group, they could be considered 'ordinary' in that their progression through school involved doing some work, and not trying to dominate or sexually harass females in the school (Brown, 1987; Wolpe, 1988; Lees, 1993). It is possible to provide a broad categorisation of the boys by considering their relationship to football (see Table 2). This was a key aspect of the hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary and will be discussed more fully later in the chapter.

There were four boys who were regarded by their teacher, Philip Norris, as 'Star' football players; they were known by shortened versions of their surnames, hence 'Mac' (Peter Mackay), 'Ossie' (Peter Oswald), 'Dougie' (Simon Douglas) and 'Smittie' (John Smith). The four were not necessarily 'best friends', and certainly did not always choose to sit together in the class, but they did play football together every break and lunch time. These boys were also key players in the school football team.

At the other end of the spectrum in terms of their football abilities were Mark and Matthew. Whilst both boys had a keen interest in the game,

they were not seen to be particularly adept at the game, hence they were always the last to be chosen when teams were being assembled for class football. Similarly, Hara was among the last to be chosen, but, in his case, this was due to his lack of familiarity with the game as he had only recently moved from Japan to the North East.

Of the other boys, Deepak was a keen footballer and believed himself an expert player, which was not a view apparently shared by either the other boys or the class teacher. He was described by Mac as "too bossy and won't share the ball". This characteristic of 'sole player' and the accompanying bossiness' extended into the classroom and was a feature of his personality the girls frequently commented on. Deepak's assertive and dominant attitudes and behaviours, and the way in which he was positioned in teacher discourses as 'awkward', demonstrates the problems associated with cultural stereotyping (see Troyna & Hatcher, 1992; Connolly, 1998a). That is, the construction of Asian boys as 'effeminate' or 'invisible' was not applicable and, although beyond the bounds of this study, raises issues related to social class.

Tim was the most academic boy in the class. He was not overly committed to football, but had an interest in it and also joined in the lunch and break time games. In a group in which all the boys appeared to get on reasonably well, Tim was amongst the most popular and was particularly liked by the girls. In interviews, the girls commented on the fact Tim was 'kind', 'helpful' and had a 'good sense of humour'.

Lee, Michael, Nigel and Malcolm were all keen to be chosen for the school football team, and they spent a considerable amount of time talking about it when not playing it. They were all, in fact, selected for the team at

various points, but were not a part of the core team in the way Mac, Ossie, Smittie and Dougie were. One aspect which distinguished Mac *et al.* from Lee, Michael, Nigel and Malcolm was that the former always appeared to be relaxed and at ease with whatever they were doing, whilst the latter were always louder and more active. This may have had something to do with the fact that each one had something about them which made them 'different' and therefore a target for any negative behaviours that did occur; Lee was large both in height and girth, Michael often smelt, and Nigel and Malcolm were ungainly.

The remaining two boys, Stephen and William, attended the school for part of the observation period but had left when the interviews took place. Both boys can be placed in a similar category to Tim; that is, they were interested in football, but not overly so, and were generally 'laid back', academically competent boys. (See Table 2 overleaf)

Table 2

Boys' Relationships to Football

FOOTBALL	BOYS
'Stars'	Ossie Smittie Mac Dougie
Able Players	Lee Michael Nigel Malcolm
Sole Player	Deepak
Spectators	Tim Stephen William
Lacking Skills	Matthew Mark Hara

The following section will explore Deneway Primary School's approach to 'equal opportunities'. The distinction between the official policy on 'equal

opportunities' and classroom practices of the male teachers reveals an 'accommodatory' characteristic of the hegemonic masculinity of the school and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8.

The School and 'Equal Opportunities'

Ostensibly there was a clear commitment by Deneway Primary to eradicating gender inequalities. The school brochure refers in its School Aims to equal opportunities:

> In line with (Oldchester) LEA we as a school have a commitment to effecting the necessary changes in school which will develop a non-sexist and non-racist education system, one which does not discriminate on any basis and which values all pupils as individuals in their own right.
> (Deneway School Brochure, 1992, p. 4)

In addition, equal opportunities as a curriculum topic was studied by pupils in Years 5 and 6. The male teachers of the upper junior classes, Philip Norris and Stephen Coles, would confront gender stereotypical comments, such as when the school secretary asked for two strong boys to help move some furniture and Philip Norris responded, "We have strong girls here too, perhaps they would like to volunteer". However, an espoused concern in official documents, and the challenges to stereotypical gender categorising practices, did not tackle the subtle ways whereby girls in Class Y were placed in a marginal position to boys. There was evidence of the kind of implicit practices identified in the literature on gender and schooling (Measor and Sikes, 1992).

Despite Philip Norris's interest in equal opportunities, he seemed unaware of the tension between his *professional* aims for equality for both sexes and his *personal* understandings of gender relations (Levitin & Chananie, 1972; Clarricoates, 1983). For example, the general 'housekeeping' of the classroom was nearly always given to the girls. So, girls were asked to "clean the floor", "tidy the tables", and "sort out the maths cupboard". Similarly, girls' interests were neglected and, ironically, 'equal opportunities' was used as a means to justify this. On one such occasion, when the children were doing a topic on Vikings, Philip Norris announced at story time that he had found two "really interesting books about Vikings". Over the course of the following two weeks he read the first of these, *Sea Wolves*, to the class. It was an action adventure tale with no female characters and without any reference to the human relationships which existed between the characters. It has to be said that Philip Norris was not alone in selecting stories which had a distinct male-bias (as observations of other teachers who took Class Y suggested that story time was a place where females rarely received a mention). At another time, the class were involved in making a contribution to the end of term school production. The theme chosen was *The Jarrow March*. This involved the boys as the main players and the girls acting out roles as wives and daughters, which basically meant none of them had a speaking part and the main action involved them waving to the 'men' . When this apparent marginalisation of the girls' and girls' interests was raised with Philip Norris he argued:

> Certainly, I think, this used to be a problem . . . when teachers would choose 'boys things' to help with control and the like . . . but it's not the same today. The girls *are* interested in Vikings and things boys have traditionally been

> interested in and it's only fair and right that we shouldn't have these old ideas about 'girls' interests' and 'boys' interests'. *Field notes*

This argument could only have credibility if there were occasions when 'girls' interests' had a central place, but this was never the case at any time during the observation period. Mobilising the language of equal opportunities to explain and justify the marginalisation, if not neglect, of the interests of girls and women has been argued by some commentators to be one of the unintended backlash effects of equal rights reforms (Faludi, 1991; French, 1992; Kenway, 1995). A more plausible explanation for the focus on boys' interests was that promotion of masculine concerns occupied a central place in the hegemonic masculinity of the school. This can be identified more clearly by looking, firstly, at the relationship between masculinity and football generally; and, secondly, by considering its place in the construction and negotiation of the hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary School.

Football and Masculinity

Football has attracted a great deal of research interest, particularly amongst male sociologists. Some writers have tried to explain the "quasi-religious" (Murphy *et al.*, 1990, p.1) nature of the support the game seems to generate in countries all over the world (Robins, 1982; Dunning, *et al.*, 1988). The majority of these explanations are couched in the language which evokes the characteristics currently associated with hegemonic masculinity (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997). For example, Murphy *et al.*, 1990 argue that football requires:

> . . . a fine balance between a number of interdependent polarities . . . the polarity between *force* and *skill*, that between providing scope for *physical challenge* and *controlling* it, that between *individual* and team play and that between *attack* and *defence*. (p. 4, my emphasis)

In the literature which looks explicitly at the relationship between masculinities and sport, Connell (1983) has argued that it instructs men in two aspects of power: the development of force ("the irresistible occupation of space", p. 18) and skill ("the ability to operate on the objects within that space, including other humans", p. 18). The rules of football, where territorial control is important, almost literally conform to this definition.

The reasons for the emotional involvement the game invokes are less clear and more difficult to pinpoint (Westwood, 1990; Hornby, 1992; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). The sociological literature on football implies that the game allows a space in which a type of intimacy can be achieved without relinquishing emotional control. Sallie Westwood argues that football:

> . . . offers an area in which men can work together and invoke loyalty and camaraderie while it also offers a space for the drama of performance where individuals can shine and have status and acclaim. (Westwood, 1990, p. 69)

The significance of football in allowing a space in which aspects of masculinity can be elaborated has been discussed by a number of writers (Westwood, 1990; Hornby, 1992; Miedzian, 1992). The game itself encapsulates opportunities for exercising many of the aspects of

hegemonic masculinity identified by Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997), such as competitiveness, discipline, physical strength, and adventurousness. It can be seen that, in the rules and the literal 'playing out' of the game, football provides a means for public declarations of masculinity.

Schooling, Football and Masculinity

The links between schooling, sport and masculinity have a long history. The idea that 'manliness' could be achieved partly through sport is a view that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain but also affected countries within the British Empire (Vance, 1975; Roper & Tosh, 1991). The increasing emphasis on sport and physical strenuousness was to encourage a spartan, athletic and conformist 'muscular manliness' which contested the Christian manliness of the early nineteenth century (Segal, 1990). A widely held opinion in the late nineteenth century was that Britain held its commanding position in the world because of the high quality of its political and governmental leadership (Roper & Tosh, 1991). This high quality, it was thought, had been achieved through the system of public school education. These public schools produced a certain sort of masculinity through, initially, a rigorous selection of pupils on social class criteria, namely those who could afford the fees, followed by a harsh system of schooling in which only the most fit and able survived (Mangan, 1987; Heward, 1991). As Christine Heward (1991) has argued:

> Much of the justification of traditional public school hardening, through such experiences as team games . . . . was that it induced courage and the subordination of self and individuality to the group, necessary in future leaders. (p. 2)

Modern forms of football appear to have developed in the public schools around the 1840s, and the game was therefore, initially, an exclusive preserve of the upper and middle classes (Dunning *et al.*, 1988; Murphy, *et al.*, 1990). However, after the 1870s it became more of a working-class sport, although this does not mean that professional football was brought about through working-class initiatives. On the contrary, from 1888 to 1915 the majority of directors of professional clubs were middle-class, which suggests that professional football had been developed *for* the working-class rather than *by* them (Mason, 1988).

The proposition that "football is all about politics" (Westwood, 1990, p. 71) is supported by the fact that the onset of professional football was seen by those in power as beneficial to the working-classes. For example, football was widely regarded as a means of keeping working-class men away from the pubs, and also acting as a counter to social unrest and disorder (Dunning *et al.*, 1988). From this it can be suggested that football was developed in schools as a deliberate political strategy; to teach upper- and middle-class males to be leaders and to induce discipline in lower-class males (Delamont, 1980; Heward, 1988).

Whilst the team games-cult of the early British public schools no longer occupies the same exalted status, it still remains important (Danziger, 1988). As Connell (1987) has said of a study of an Australian ruling-class boys' school:

> Both official school policy, and the ethos among staff, parents and Old Boys, encourage activities in which the kind of aggressive, physically dominant masculinity represented by the Bloods (the sporting group) is at a premium . . . Yet

those boys who react against the model embraced by the Bloods are not simply pushed into limbo. For the school not only wants football glory, it also must have academic success. A high rate of performance in matriculation examinations is necessary if the school is to hold its position in the now strongly competitive secondary-education market. In short, the school needs the Cyrils (the academic group) too. (p. 177-8)

The importance of sporting achievement is not restricted to fee-paying schools. Studies of secondary and primary schooling have shown the continuing significance of sport, particularly football, to the ethos of the school (Hargreaves, 1967; Measor and Woods, 1984; Connolly, 1994a). In terms of schooling and masculinities there seems to be a consensus in the literature that, regardless of social class, sporting success has the edge over academic success (Hargreaves, 1967; Corrigan, 1979; Walker, 1988). For example, Clarricoates (1978) says in her study of four primary schools:

> The preferences and likes of teachers must also be equated to the type of school. Particularly in the working-class schools, high academic performance among boys was less of an achievement than being in the football team . . . (p. 163).

At the same time, the studies by David Hargreaves (1967) and Paul Corrigan (1979) have suggested that social class is a significant variable in boys' engagement with football at school. They suggest that by the time they reach secondary school, working-class boys are unwilling to engage in any activities which are structured and *organised* by the school, which includes playing football for the school team. The significance of social

class as a variable in the boys in Class Y's relationship to the hegemonic masculinity of the school will be considered later in this chapter.

Deneway Primary, Football and Hegemonic Masculinity

Although the school had only been open a short time, Deneway Primary had already established its strong commitment to football. This was not surprising given that football occupies a central place, literally and metaphorically, in the heart of Oldchester City. The local team is in the Premier division of the Football League and attracts support from males and females. This may be one of the reasons why parents of boys in the football team never commented on the consequences leaving school early twice a week to travel to other schools for a match might have on their children's academic development.

The primacy of football in the school was evident in the way in which extra-curricular activities were presented. The school brochure, wittingly or otherwise, implied that boys' sports were of higher status:

> EXTRA ACTIVITIES
>
> On the extracurricular front, the children will be given the opportunity to participate in a number of activities including:
>
> Football
>
> Rugby
>
> Athletics/Cross Country
>
> Dance
>
> Nature Club
>
> Cooking
>
> Recorders, etc. (School Brochure, 1992, p. 14)

The game's high profile in the school could be seen from the regular football practices and inter-school matches, the setting up of a football club, and a concern with the performance of the school team was a regular feature of assemblies. However, despite the school's official policy on equal opportunities, football was ring fenced as a male pursuit. The official school team was totally male, and the team were coached and taken to matches by the Years 5 and 6 teachers, Philip Norris and Stephen Coles.

Football was of central importance to the hegemonic masculinity of the school in that it enabled a particular mode of middle-class masculinity which emphasised intelligence and proficiency. This was achieved in two ways: firstly, by differentiating between the boys at Deneway and those from other schools; and, secondly, by giving status to certain groups of boys in relation to girls and 'other' boys within the school.

All the boys in Class Y (and indeed in the other key stage 2 classes) were supporters of Oldchester football team. The only football strip evident in the playground was that of the local team, and conversations about football always appeared to revolve around its current place in the Premiership. The boys' (and men teachers') exclusive support for the team was often used as a means of indicating their superiority over boys from other schools who may have supported alternative local teams. In particular, reference would be made to Deneway boys' superior 'coolness' and 'intelligence'. On one such occasion, Class Y were travelling on a coach to the swimming baths. The driver's cab was covered in football stickers of another local team, also in the Premiership:

Once seated Malcolm said to Nigel "If (Oldchester) supporters had got on and seen those stickers there'd be nothing left of this bus by the end of the road!" Lee overhears and shouts to Philip Norris "Hey Mr. N. - have you seen those (Bloxteth) stickers by the bus driver? Oldchester fans'd 'ave him and this bus!!" Philip Norris stands up and moves to where they are sitting. He says "Do you really think (Oldchester) supporters are that thick? Would you, for instance, do something so pathetic and stupid? Of course not, only (Bloxteth) supporters would be so dense". *Field notes*

On another occasion, the school football team were scheduled to play a school team from the south of the city. Stephen Coles came into Class Y to ask for the boys who were playing that day:

Philip Norris observes that they will be playing against a team who seemed to be having a run of success and had won every game in the last eight. Stephen Coles says loudly to the whole class "(School) team won't be a problem for us, will they lads? After all we're (Oldchester) fans and have picked up on their moves on the pitch . . . there are kids at (school) who support (Bloxteth) and even (Chesboro)!! (Two local teams, one in the Premiership and one in the First Division). What chance will they have against us - we're the ones with the brains." *Field notes*

The 'them' (dense) - 'us' (intelligent) was continued within the school site, but this time the (dense) 'other' was girls. One way this was achieved was

through the use of coded language. This was used mostly by the class teacher, Philip Norris, in communicating with the boys in the class. For example, he would usually write a greetings message on the chalkboard every morning which would say things like, "Only 25 school days to half-term"; but occasionally there would be more cryptic messages such as, "Sad old them, clever old us". On this occasion Beatrice and Holly were trying to puzzle out what this meant when the class teacher came into the room. They asked what it was about, to which Philip Norris said, "Ask Dougie or someone". When it came to registration, Philip Norris asked Smittie to "Put the girls out of their misery and tell them what this is all about". Several boys spoke at once, with the gist being that the message meant: 'Sad old Bloxteth, clever Oldchester', as the former had been beaten 3-0 in a local match the night before. At another time, the teacher was starting the class activities for the afternoon when he saw the caretaker walking past the classroom:

> Philip Norris calls out "Bob!" The caretaker does not hear him. He says "Well we've got to know what he thinks haven't we? Who'll go and ask him?" The girls (and I) are puzzled. Smittie and several other boys shout out "I'll go". He sends Smittie and Mac to catch up with Bob. When they return they say "He said he'll get over it but had to drown his sorrows at the pub". It seems a goal scored for Oldchester in the match the night before had been disallowed. *Field notes*

Girls did play football, but were clearly positioned in a marginal role in relation to it. For example, Philip Norris would often use PE sessions as an opportunity of providing the boys with more practice:

The children are changed for PE. The boys are all wearing football strips . . . Footballs (sponge) and tennis balls have been put out by the teacher for warm-up. Philip Norris calls across to Michael who has a football "Hey lad, here lad, kick it here". When all the children are changed the teacher asks for requests for games. The majority of boys ask for football. Teacher says "We're going to . . . (pause, laughs)" Some groans from girls. He asks "What are you groaning for? You don't know what we're going to do yet!" Beatrice says "Bet we do." Teacher says "We're going to have a game of . . . (pauses again and laughs) football!!" Several girls groan whilst the boys cheer. Philip Norris says "If you don't want to play you can sit it out". Hilary, Ruth and Deborah sit out.

Those girls who decided to join in the game were placed at a disadvantage, as indeed were some of the boys, simply by the accepted forms of communication. The majority of the boys in Class Y played football every breaktime together, and frequently with Philip Norris. For these, various nicknames or shortened versions of names were used to attract each other's attention. Not only were they not used to calling to people outside of their exclusive group to "pass the ball", but shouting out "Hilary" or "Malcolm" did not have the same intimacy and intensity as "Mac" or "Ossie". When Philip Norris attempted to include them by giving them nicknames, it often ostracised them even further; for example, when Hilary joined in she was given the name "Thumper" for kicking the ball hard. She appeared quite traumatised, as every time the nickname was used she would stand still for a moment. After several PE sessions when this had occurred she stopped joining in.

It was also evident in the positions in the game that were allocated to the girls, and some of the less adept footballers, that perceived (male) skill was given prestige and status. During one PE session, Deborah asked Philip Norris why it was that boys always got to be in the nets (goal keeper), to which he replied, "You want someone to keep the other team's goals out don't you, so let's go for the best!" Given that there were more children in the class than in two football teams, the girls and the 'extra' boys were always given 'add-on' positions, usually as additional defenders.

The girls in Class Y had been made very aware that football was not something they were supposed to take part in, even though the official word was that they could. Several girls referred to the barriers which were placed in their way. In one interview, I had asked two of the girls, Maggie and Beth, if they thought teachers treated boys and girls equally. The first issue they raised in respect of their perception of the class teacher, Philip Norris, was that he favoured boys' sporting activities:

Maggie: He gives the boys an advantage . . . like he gives them mostly first choice in like what games they want to play in PE 'cos we always play cricket or football.

Beth: Well on the play yard they never let girls play football!

CS: Wouldn't you start up your own game of football then?

Beth: We haven't got a ball . . .

Maggie: We're only allowed one ball per class and the boys always get it . . .

Beth: And it's on the top yard, and Year One's got a space and Year Two's got a space and the boys say it's their space.

CS: Have you ever been and spoken to anyone?

Beth: Well the teachers just say "Let the girls have the play yard as well, it's not just for boys" but nobody does anything. Mr. N's (Philip Norris) always playing football with the boys.

The school offered a Sports Club and a Football Club outside school hours. At first, both clubs were held on the same night until the girls protested that the arrangement meant neither they nor the boys would be able to do both. Consequently, the Sports Club moved to another night but this did not prevent the domination of the Football Club by a masculine ethos the girls found off-putting:

Beatrice: They're more boys in the clubs. Is it 'Geordie Boys' who Ossie and Smittie play for? Well it wouldn't be very good for a girl walking in. Sometimes Mr. Coles (who was running the Football Club) sticks up for the girls but not very often . . . you don't feel right.

In another interview, Holly, Marie and Saskia spoke about how the boys' attempts to prevent the girls joining in with their football games at lunch times were supported by the male teachers:

Holly: The boys are sexist, because Mr. Naismith like, not trains em, but says boys would prefer playing football . . . and sometimes I feel like having a little kick around but we can't.

Marie: Mr. Kenning says its like for the girls too, but it isn't like that . . . He only lets us have one ball a class and the boys give it to Bob (the caretaker) to look after and they rush their dinner so they can get out first.

Saskia: The boys gang up on us and Malcolm will go "All right, we'll give you a game but I bet you we'll beat you. . . "

Holly: (interrupting) Then they kick it over the goal dead high and they go "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!" but when we kick it high they go "That wasn't a goal, it was too high."

Marie: When we do get a chance to play, they play around with the rules.

Holly: If we had as much practice as them we'd be as good as them.

As the comments of the girls indicate, the attitudes of the male teachers in the school were of particular significance to the hegemonic masculinity of the school.

Teacher Attitudes

There is widespread agreement that teachers' masculine positions are crucial to the hegemonic masculinity of the school and to the relationships which exist within it (Kessler *et al.*, 1985; Abraham, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1996a). As Connolly's (1994a) study of a primary school shows, football played an ever-increasing role within the school following the appointment of a new head and a subsequent appointment of a male infant teacher. Together with the male deputy head, these three promoted the game extensively and to the relative exclusion of other sports:

> One of the more significant effects of all this was to create a certain masculine ethos or culture within the school; evident between the head, deputy-head and other male staff (-) and including some of the older (-) boys. It primarily manifested itself in the form of masculine banter and camaraderie to which female staff and girls generally within the school were excluded from. (Connolly, 1994a, p. 204)

A similar situation could be found at Deneway Primary School, where Class Y's teacher, Philip Norris, together with support from the Year 6 teacher, Stephen Coles, and the headteacher, Tom Kenning, ran the Football Club and organised the school team's football matches. When Philip Norris left the school his replacement, Bill Naismith, took over his responsibilities for arranging football matches etc.

As will be shown in more detail in Chapter 8, Philip Norris utilised a teaching strategy which Woods (1990) has referred to as 'fraternization'; that is where a teacher aligns him or herself with their pupils:

> Fraternization takes many forms. Young teachers, especially, by their appearance, style of dress, manner, speech and interest frequently identify strongly with the pupils . . . Implicit alliances can form against the main structure of the school. (p. 106).

The approach Philip Norris used was to adopt the position of 'school pupil' as in the way suggested in the following observation:

> The class teacher (PN) has the children sitting around him on the carpet . . . He tells the children they will have to get on with the plays they are producing for Class 1 on their own after breaktime, "I'm on playground duty and Mr. Kenning (headteacher) wants to see me . . . I'm probably in trouble again . . . don't know what I've done this time." One pupil shouts "You'll be getting the sack!" and another, "You'll have to stand outside the staffroom at playtimes for a week!" Teacher groans, "Not again". *Field notes*

The form of fraternization which Philip Norris used for classroom management could be termed 'laddish', in that it drew on those patterns of masculinity discussed in studies of working-class adolescent male pupils at school and which have been referred to as the 'lads' (Willis, 1977), the 'footballers' (Walker, 1988) and, the 'Macho Lads' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). In this case, the characteristics of these similar forms of masculinity were

reworked into a middle-class adult male (teacher) version as a means of classroom management; that is, it revolved around athletic prowess, having a laugh, (not) looking smart, and having a good time with his mates (pupils). The following excerpts demonstrate how these characteristics featured as a regular part of daily classroom life:

> Class Y are having large apparatus in the hall. Three of the boys are having a race to see who can reach the top of the climbing frame first. Philip Norris runs across the hall and clambers to the top of the frame beating the boys. *Field notes*

> PE outside on the field. The children make a line and Philip Norris shouts "Last one to the long grass is a wally!" He runs with the children and arrives first. *Field notes*

> The end of an afternoon. The children have their coats on ready to go. Philip Norris says, "We've had a really good afternoon . . . even Dougie smiled even though I'd just fallen backwards through the door . . . or perhaps it was because he'd just farted!" Children laugh. *Field notes*

> William comes into the classroom sporting a new shorn, spiky haircut. The teacher says to the others who are milling around "Look at this! William's haircut is worse than mine!" All children, including William, laugh. *Field notes*

> This morning a children's author is visiting the school and will work with Class Y after break. At milk time, the children collect their milk and sit on the carpet. Philip

Norris gets out a tie and puts it on saying "I asked in the shop for something that would impress . . . trouble is it's so long since I've worn one!" He forms the tie into a bow around his neck. *Field notes*

The children are in the hall for gymnastics. The boys are ready first. Philip Norris tells them to get a ball and have a 'kick about'. Mark comes out of the changing room and asks Philip Norris what they are doing. He replies, "Having a good time . . . improvising . . . hanging out while we wait for the girls". *Field notes*

It was Philip Norris who initiated the break and lunchtime football games, and he would spend every lunchtime playing with the boys. Inevitably, a closer relationship developed between Philip Norris and the boys with whom he played football. One way this could be seen was in the use of nicknames. As was said earlier, shortened versions of surnames or nicknames were used to call other players' attention during a game, hence Dougie, Smittie, Ossie and Mac. Philip Norris gave other boys nicknames based on his experiences of playing football with them. 'Chopper' arose because Tim had "chopped Mr. N. up and hacked his shins"; and 'Goggles' (implying he needed spectacles) was, as the boy himself explained, "Because I always hit the goalpost never the net". Philip Norris suggested to the boys they called him 'Mr. N.'. The use of these forms of address extended into the classroom, and although eventually all the children called Philip Norris, 'Mr. N', initially it was only used by the boys he played football with.

The male camaraderie which built up between the male staff and some of the boys through football (Connolly, 1994a), enabled the dominance of 'laddishness' to prevail in different situations. For example, it has been shown how the humour of male bonding relationships centres around sexual and aggressive banter (Hearn, 1985; Lyman, 1987; Kehily & Nayak, 1997). This aspect of the boys' relationship with Philip Norris was played out in front of the girls, who often appeared to be embarrassed or uncomfortable by these displays of 'male humour':

> The class is in the hall playing a game in which one person chooses another person and gives them a task to act out. Michael is 'on' first. He says "Mr. N. Putting a condom on!" Philip Norris laughs but makes no move. Several girls are staring at the floor, others look uncomfortable. Nobody speaks. After about a minute, Michael says "Be a Viking". Philip Norris runs across the circle to Saskia, picks her up and runs back across to his place. *Field notes*

It is first thing in the morning and Philip Norris is taking the register. Two girls from Year 1 come into the classroom and hand him a note. Philip Norris reads the note and starts to laugh:

> Maggie: What's so funny?
>
> Teacher: Just a little love note from Mrs. Morris. It says "Darling Mr. N, I can't wait to have a cup of coffee with you at breaktime . . ."

Several of the boys and a few girls are laughing. The two girls from Mrs. Morris's class have red cheeks and look at

their shoes. Maggie interrupts Philip Norris's reading of the 'love letter' and says:

Maggie: You've got a girlfriend.

Teacher: It's just a joke.

Maggie: Everything's just a joke to you.

Field notes

As indicated here, and discussed in greater depth in the following chapter, several of the girls in Class Y did challenge behaviours of both the male teachers and boys they found discomforting. The point here is that allusions to male/female heterosexual practices were a central feature of the humour of the male culture of the classroom.

Whilst there was a general male camaraderie in the classroom, the fact that some boys regularly played football with Philip Norris resulted in a privileging of 'footballers' over 'non-footballers'. These privileges ranged across personal privileges such as being given greater leniency in controlling their own time ("I'll leave it to you to finish when you want. I know you want to be out practising for the game on Tuesday"), to privileges as a high status group within the school (such as their football successes being applauded in school assemblies when other sporting teams were not).

The privileging of 'active' (competent) footballers over 'less active' (incompetent) footballers did not appear to cause tension between the boys themselves, but they did define relationships with each other in terms of the game.

Boys' Friendships

A passion for football, in terms of playing the game, being a spectator and talking about it, is not exclusive to one pattern of masculinity but is identifiable in many different modes of masculinities, as studies of boys and secondary schooling have shown (Corrigan, 1979; Walker, 1988; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). At Deneway Primary, the boys in Class Y defined their friendships with each other on three distinctive reasonings: *Camaraderie* (co-operation, helpfulness); *Bullying* (whether a boy was aggressive or not); and *'Stars'* (boys who were good at football). The latter category was most evident when it came to organising group interviews with the boys:

CS: When I asked everyone who they wanted to be interviewed with all the boys named the boys in this group. Why do you think that might be?

Smittie: Ossie's the most popular - he's one of our best footballers.

Dougie: Matthew . . . and Mark Walker, they're not like popular.

Smittie: They're not very good footballers.

Dougie: They don't play football much and that's why they're not popular. They'll play with them but they don't like talking to

them as much. I know it's a bit stupid like but that's the way it is . . .

Ossie: Anyone who's not very good at football.

The actual football skills and abilities of individual boys did not preclude them from being spoken of as a 'good footballer' by their friends. For example, the two boys mentioned above, Matthew and Mark, both classified each other as 'good footballers' in separate interviews when discussing their friendships. The following is an excerpt from Mark's interview:

CS: Who are your friends in this class?

Mark: Deepak, Ossie, Smittie, Dougie, Lee and Matthew.

Lee: Ossie, Mac, Matthew, Dougie, Mark, Smittie.

CS: What is it that you like about those boys?

Mark: They're all good at football . . . perhaps Deepak isn't so good . . . Matthew's good in goal sometimes.

It would be reasonable to suppose from the amount of time that the boys spent playing football (every breaktime and lunchtime) that it was their

prime sporting interest. However, interviews with the seemingly most football-devoted group of boys, Ossie, Mac, Smittie and Dougie, highlighted a situation which provided a critical incident in terms of the case study of dominant masculinities at Deneway Primary. All four boys revealed that football was not their prime interest; their favourite sports were judo, running, squash and swimming respectively. It was also interesting to note that when Class Y were allowed 'choice' in PE activities, Ossie and Dougie would jog around the school field, whilst Smittie would play with a tennis bat and ball, and Mac would choose a skipping rope rather than pick up one of the many footballs which were always available.

It was said earlier that the fact that some boys in Class Y appeared to be more 'favoured' than others did not appear to cause conflict. Studies of male friendship groups have pointed to the importance of friendships to pre-adolescent males (Fine, 1980; Leahy, 1983), a key feature of which is the "co-operation, integration and sharing" of joint activities (Hall and Jose, 1983, p. 269). Football provided opportunities for developing and reinforcing friendship bonds amongst all the boys in Class Y, regardless of their actual sporting skill. Those boys who were *'Stars'* in terms of football could access privileges more readily than other groups, such as girls and the less skilled footballers, but this does not mean to say they immersed themselves totally in the hegemonic masculinity of the school. Rather, the boys passively resisted a total collusion with the culturally exalted mode of masculinity in the school.

Heterosexuality, Sexual Harassment and the Boys

A key characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual. The male teachers would occasionally draw on male-female *difference* as a way of policing the boys' (hetero)sexual masculine identities, for example:

> The children are filing past the headteacher to go into the hall for assembly. Michael has an evident fragrant scent about him which smells like after shave. As he passes, Mr. Kenning asks loudly, "Are you wearing perfume lad?" *Field notes*

Stephen Coles (Year 6 teacher) has gone into the boys' changing rooms to hurry the boys along. It is the dress rehearsal for the school production. When they come out he says to them, "There's a terrible smell in the boys changing rooms. It's not the usual unpleasant body smells of sweaty boys . . . instead I could smell hair gel, hairspray, deodorant, after shave. I thought for a minute I'd gone into the girls changing rooms!" When I asked him about this comment he said, "I don't want to encourage them . . . I don't use anything like that myself, . . . a good wash in the morning is enough". *Field notes*

Such strategies are not unusual. There is a substantial amount of evidence of boys and men controlling others' masculine behaviours by questioning their 'maleness' (heterosexuality) (Hough, 1985; Askew & Ross, 1988; Jackson, 1990; Lee, 1993). One of the worst insults for a boy is for his attitudes and behaviours to be likened to those of girls (Seidler, 1991;

Miedzian, 1992). However, hegemonic masculinity is not simply a matter of policing other males' sexualised behaviours'; it also requires individual males to demonstrate their own heterosexual identity (Connell, 1995). Philip Norris adopted a sexualised discourse in his relationships with the girls in Class by frequently using the girls' 'femaleness' as a means of drawing attention to his (heterosexual) maleness. For example:

> The children are told to meet up in the hall for PE after they have got changed. Philip Norris adds "You'll want to be quick girls because I've got my sexy shorts with me today" and he wiggles his hips. *Field notes*

The other male teachers did not utilise such overtly sexualised behaviours in their interactions with the girls but, as will be noted later, the fact that they often made use of sexist language and behaviours and failed to challenge the sexual approaches of their colleagues implied unanimity. The relationships between Philip Norris, other male teachers and the girls will be explored more thoroughly in Chapter 8. What is of particular significance here is that, although the camaraderie generated initially by football implied there were collective, shared perceptions of 'being male' in the school setting, on no occasion during the course of the observation was there an incident of a boy sexually harassing a girl nor did the girls make any reference in interviews to such behaviours by the boys. The question is: why the boys in Class Y did *not* attempt to access those attitudes and behaviours encompassed in the hegemonic masculinity of the school relating to male-female (hetero)sexual *difference* .

A possible explanation of why the boys did not access greater power within the school by adopting sexual/sexist discourses can be found by

considering the interaction between the locale of the school, the age of the boys and discourses on *school pupil* and *boy* (see also Chapter 5).

Locale of Deneway Primary

Deneway Primary was set in a fairly affluent area where a substantial number of the female parents had professional careers. The boys in Class Y encountered a range of male and female subject positions; women were active in the life of the school, not only as parent-helpers but as members of the school governing body. It has been argued elsewhere that the gender gap narrows as one moves up the socio-economic scale (Teese *et al.*, 1995; Kenway & Willis, 1998), so the middle-class boys at Deneway were likely to be more familiar with some women, specifically their immediate family, neighbours and teachers, having greater access to social power than were the boys at Benwood Primary.

In addition, the boys in Class Y were frequently exposed to the challenges launched by many of the girls in Class Y to the perpetuation of inequalities in gender relations. For example, perceived sexist comments and actions of the male teachers would be confronted by some of the girls; for example, asking for a line in a drama production to be changed from 'men' to 'people', and pointing out the implications for girls of having the Sports Club and Football Club on the same evening. Thus, these boys were living in family, school and neighbourhood environments where the progress made by women over the last twenty-five years was at its most obvious.

Age of the boys

Gary Fine (1980) argues in his research into pre-adolescent male friendship groups that three types of friendship content seem salient during this period:

- work related activity;
- talk about sex and sexuality;
- aggression.

With regard to the second category, Fine points out that when it comes to sex and sexuality the emphasis is on talk rather than on action. Whilst discussing sex may be a high priority for pre-adolescent boys, there is a substantial body of research which shows how interacting with girls is positively avoided (Hallinan and Tuma, 1978; Best, 1983; Lloyd and Duveen, 1992). Observations showed that the boys in Class Y rarely initiated any interactions with the girls, although on those occasions when they were expected to collaborate they would do so apparently affably.

During interviews, a few of the boys purported not to know the names of all the girls in the class, by reverting to descriptions such as 'the one with the short hair who wears glasses'; it also emerged that some cross gender friendships did exist. These friendships were with girls who shared the characteristics the boys identified earlier; that is, *Camaraderie,* (not) *Bullying* and *'Stars'*. So whilst the boys listed 'moodiness', 'sarcasm' and 'snootiness' as reasons why they disliked many of the girls; those they liked, Holly and Emily (a girl who joined the class in Year 6), were described in terms of 'having a laugh', 'sticking up for you' and 'being

good in a (fun) fight'. Although the boys did not engage in sexual or sexist discourses with the girls and, in some cases, paid so little attention to their female classmates they did not know their names, many justified their likes and dislikes in terms of the girls' physical appearance:

CS: You were saying you didn't like Saskia . . .

Lee: Yes . . . and Maggie, Kyoko . . .

Malcolm: Ruth and Rachel . . .

CS: What is it about those girls you don't like?

Lee: They're horrible, they don't look nice.

CS: You've talked about the girls you don't like . . . are there any girls you get on with?

Ossie: I li . . .(pause) I think Holly, Emily.

Mac: Yes, Emily's one of mine as well . . . nice legs.

The boys were at an age then when male friendships are particularly important and relationships with girls are generally avoided.

The third key factor which helps to explain why boys, either as a group or individually, did not take part in sexually harassing behaviours can be found in the tension between being a *boy* and being a *school pupil*.

Schooling and 'Boys'

The middle-class pupils at Deneway Primary were in an advantageous position in that they had access to the forms of cultural capital which could enable a successful passage through mainstream schooling and facilitate entry to higher education and the professions (Bourdieu, 1986). It has been argued elsewhere that the shared values and culture of the school and middle class families serves to reduce the chances of conflict, particularly in terms of teacher-pupil relationships (Willis, 1977; Ball, 1981; Woods, 1990). Also, studies of masculinities and schooling have shown that conformist boys, regardless of social class, tend to support the value system of the school because of the personal benefits that can accrue. In his study of working class boys and schooling, Willis (1977) said:

> It is not so much that they (school conformists) support teachers, rather they support the *idea* of teachers. (They have) invested something of their own identities in the formal aims of education and support of the school institution . . . (p. 13)

At the same time, Andrew Pollard (1985a) has pointed out that "because of the basic differences in the structural position of (teachers and pupils), there is always an inherent conflict" (p. 156). These differences in the structural position of teachers and male pupils had the potential to generate a particular tension between the boys in Class Y and their male teachers at Deneway Primary. Whilst on the one hand, as pupils, certain boys were able to access personal privileges as a result of their support for the school through football and the camaraderie which existed between them and Philip Norris, on the other hand, he was a teacher and therefore needed to be *seen* as different to them. To explain this more fully, studies

of pupils' attitudes towards teachers have shown that they do not like teachers who have favourites (Gannaway, 1984; Woods, 1990), and for a boy or boys to be seen as a 'teacher's pet' or in some way closely allied would define him as 'soft' or 'effeminate' thereby threatening his masculine status (Formani, 1990; Jackson, 1990). In an interesting twist, some of the boys defined the heterosexualised behaviour of two of their male teachers as feminine, as a means of distinguishing between the teachers' actions and their own attitudes towards girls. A response to one of the prompts used in the interview, 'Some of the girls in the class are all right . . . ' was:

Smittie: Mr. Naismith.

CS: Mr. Naismith isn't a girl . . . I don't understand.

Mac: He's sexist - He likes the girls better.

CS: "Teachers treat all children exactly the same . . ."

Mark: No that's not true . . . Mr. N. goes most on the girl's side . . . it's always the girls.

Michael: Just cause he's a girl!

CS: Why do you call Mr. N a girl?

Mark: He's always talking to them . . .

Michael: . . . talking about them, carrying on wi' em . . .

So, although the boys were able to draw upon the hegemonic masculinity of the school in order to gain personal benefits, the construction and negotiation of their own masculine identities in the school setting meant distancing themselves from the school authority structures and personnel. It was not 'cool to collude' (Kenway & Willis, 1998).

The combination of these three factors, the boys' experience and understandings of gender-power relations in their own lives, the nature of peer group friendships at the age of nine and ten, and the distancing from the authority of school and teachers suggests a reason why the boys in Class Y did not engage with sexualised/sexist behaviours. If being a 'swot' meant being seen to imitate and conform to the teacher, then some measures had to be adopted whereby differences could be discerned between the attitudes and actions of teachers and pupils (Alloway and Gilbert, 1997). For the boys in Class Y this meant sharing their interest in football, as it was central to the maintenance of peer group friendships and also brought some privileges, but maintaining a distance from the girls in the class and the actions and behaviours of their male teachers. (See also Chapter 5 and next chapter for discussion on tensions between discourses on *school pupils* and being a *boy/girl*.)

Conclusion

It was said in Chapter 1 that hegemonic masculinity is not 'fixed' across place and time, and that it is subject to broader influences outside of the school gates such as ideologies (of women, for example), educational policy and the local culture. The hegemonic masculinity of Deneway

Primary was framed within a mid-1990s context of a 'successful' school: it had a thriving 'partnership' with parents; was able to attract resources from local businesses; won national awards for 'curriculum excellence'; and outperformed regional primary schools in SATs. Where Benwood Primary School was struggling for survival and drew on characteristics of more violent forms of hegemonic masculinity to sustain its position, Deneway Primary was in a situation which did not demand such overt demonstrations of patriarchal authority. The hegemonic masculinity of Benwood Primary involved confrontation, challenge and aggression between males, as well as enacted upon marginalised groups, such as the young women and Asian population of Wickon. The hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary was analagous to that of an exclusive 'Golf Club' (where females are tolerated rather than fully accepted). It has been shown in this chapter that this was largely achieved through the status and importance accorded to football.

The status of football to the dominant mode of masculinity in the school needs to be set against an apparent neglect of emphasis on academic achievement both in terms of the emphasis given to it by the school and the boys themselves. It appeared that unlike the ruling class schools featured in the study by Connell *et al.* (1982) (see also, Stanley, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1994) the pupils were not urged to strive for academic success. It may be that pupils' academic successess were assumed given the catchment area and the fact that Deneway was a well-resourced school run by a headteacher who had a very high, positive profile. Also, the data were collected in the early part of the 1990s; that is, prior to the Key Stage 2 SATs and that, together with the fact that suggestions of primary league tables were in the future, may help to explain why academic achievement was not emphasised. Should this research have been conducted in the

late, rather than the early, 1990s it is fair to assume that other sites of dominant masculinities would be evident in the school. For example, Mac an Ghaill's (1994) study illustrated how various modes of masculinities were to some extent related to and organised around differing forms of academic (and other) achievement.

Although the place of football has been shown to be of significance in other ethnographies of primary schooling (Renold, 1997; Connolly, 1998a) it cannot be claimed that its role at Deneway Primary was generalisable across all schools. At Deneway Primary football did not simply serve the purpose of generating camaraderie between the males, as the rules and practices of the game itself are imbued with similar characteristics to those associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as control, skill and physical challenge (Murphy *et al.*, 1990). Football was significant in terms of the *gender regime* (Connell, *et al.*, 1982) of the school; that is, football was important in defining relationships between male teachers and boys, boys and boys, and girls and boys. The particular privileges that were granted to '*Star*' football players did not result in those boys complying with the hegemonic masculinity of the school. Whilst football was a crucial feature of hegemonic masculinity, the demand to demonstrate heterosexuality through interactions with girls was rejected, mainly as a result of the emotional/sexual stage of the boys' development. The effect of this for the girls was that they did not experience sexual harassment from the boys, although the attitudes and behaviours of the male teaching staff would often discomfort the girls. This issue will be taken up and discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 8

GIRLS AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

The main focus in the previous chapters has been on the construction of hegemonic masculinities within two school sites. However, as stated in the Introduction to this thesis, the research study was underpinned and informed by feminism. On that basis, it seems appropriate to include here a consideration of how the hegemonic masculinity of Deneway Primary School framed the educational experiences of the girls in Class Y. Unlike the preceding chapters which all include reference to particular critical incidents which 'sparked' more focused analysis and understandings, the intention here is to provide an indication of the discourses in operation at Deneway Primary. This requires an account of events denoting the shifting relationships of the girls with the dominant masculinity of the classroom, specifically in relation to interactions with the two male class teachers.

The first section will provide an introduction to the girls in Class Y. This will be followed by a consideration of the tensions which existed between the school's written equal opportunities policy and its translation into educational practices. Particular attention will be given to the stance adopted by the male teachers in the school to equal opportunities/gender reform. The final section explores the tensions that were created for the girls between the school's perceived understanding of a 'normal pupil' and wider discourses on 'being feminine' (Walkerdine, 1989; Hey, 1997).

The Girls in Class Y

For the purposes of this discussion, two broad categories have been employed in order to discuss the actions and behaviours of the girls towards hegemonic masculinity: the 'Quiet Girls' and the 'Confident Girls'. There are clear problems in using such typologies, both in terms of an apparent contradiction between using categories alongside the concept of *discourse*, and because of the danger of losing sight of the dynamic and creative state of gender relations that were apparent in the classroom. It needs to be stressed, therefore, that these categories do *not* refer to *personality types*. The labels 'Quiet' and 'Confident' were taken up and used here on the basis that they were the descriptors used by Class Y's two male teachers, Philip Norris and Bill Naismith, when talking about the girls. For example:

> Following a class discussion about the parts the pupils will play in the school production I asked Philip Norris how he decided who would do what. He replied "There's always the ones who push themselves forward . . . both boys and girls that is . . . but there's the quiet girls who, never like, . . . like Beth, Ruth and Hilary, who prefer to keep out of the spotlight". *Field notes*

> Speaking to Bill Naismith about Maggie's enthusiasm for the project she was doing for the 'Gender' topic he said, "Yes, that's Maggie for you . . . 'Equal Rights for Women' . . . she'd have made a great Suffragette! She's definitely very forthright . . . in everything really, not just this topic. But, you know, there are plenty of confident girls in this class

who speak their mind . . . look at how Marie, Sarah, Beatrice . . . um . . . Saskia, Deborah . . . I could go on . . . they're all ready to speak up". *Field notes*

The decision to make use of these two categories was made in the knowledge that there are limitations in using typologies (Mac an Ghaill, 1994), but they are helpful here in that they provide a means of organising the *strategies* the girls used in dealing with the hegemonic masculinity of the school/male teachers into groups. Although all the girls would draw on both forms of strategy in their negotiations, it was more likely those girls labelled 'Quiet' by their teachers would make greater use of 'quiet' strategies and girls described as 'Confident' would tend to favour 'confident' strategies.

Those girls who were described at various times by Philip Norris and Bill Naismith as 'Quiet' were a pair of identical twins, Ruth and Rachel, together with Hilary, Kyoko and Beth. Kyoko was Japanese and had only recently joined the class. She had some functional competence in English but still did not find conversation easy, which may be one reason why she was seen as 'Quiet'. Whether cultural stereotyping was brought into play in the teachers' interpretation of her behaviour is not known. The 'quiet' form of resistance to the hegemonic masculinity they experienced in day to day classroom life involved 'avoidance', when girls would occupy (both literally and metaphorically) the margins of the classroom.

The girls labelled as 'Confident' were another pair of identical twins, Deborah and Marie, and Beatrice, Saskia, Sarah and Holly. Confident strategies involved directly confronting and challenging any attitudes or behaviours which had the potential to make them, as females, feel

threatened or uncomfortable. Importantly, as will be shown, both of these sets of strategies were inscribed with, and played out through, heterosexual behaviours. Standing in distinction to both groups labelled by teachers as 'Quiet' or 'Confident' was Maggie. As will be shown later, Maggie favoured 'confident' strategies, but differed from the other girls in that she rejected actions which drew on female (hetero)sexuality.

The teachers' identification of the girls as either 'Quiet' or 'Confident' gave no indication of their friendship groups. As can be seen in Table 3 (overleaf), friendship networks went across categories.

Table 3

Girls' Friendship Groups

'QUIET' GIRLS	'CONFIDENT' GIRLS
Hilary	Marie Beatrice Saskia Holly
Ruth Rachel	Sarah
Kyoko	Deborah
Beth	Maggie*

*Maggie was always described by the teachers as distinct to the other girls.

The next section will explore the contradictions that emerged between the official policy of Deneway Primary school towards equal opportunities and its' educational practices.

Teaching 'Equal Opportunities'

Whilst a great deal has been written over the past two decades on the development, implementation and monitoring of equal opportunities policies in schools, there is a lack of research which considers how gender reform policies are actually taught and received. The study by Kenway *et al.* (1996) into feminist pedagogies and gender reform in Australian schools has shown that, all too often, the articulation of equal opportunities policies into practice has unintended, contradictory results.

The fact that no comparable research has been undertaken in the UK may partly be due to the wide diversity of approaches to equal opportunities evident in UK schools and partly due to the distanced, if not disinterested, stance by central government to equality issues (Rendel, 1985). Prior to the Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988), the responsibility for implementing and monitoring equal opportunities lay with local education authorities (LEAs). This did not guarantee that equal opportunities would be addressed, and although many LEAs required their schools to devise policies, some did little to instigate subsequent initiatives (Arnot, 1987). When power was removed from LEAs and handed over to school governing bodies by the ERA, the position of equal opportunities policies was made even more uncertain (Miles & Middleton, 1995).

A succession of Conservative governments have effectively removed social justice issues from the curriculum (Cole, Hill & Shan, 1997; Gillborn, 1997), however, earlier initiatives in the mid 1980s by Oldchester LEA had ensured that all schools in the area had policies on gender and 'race' inequalities.

Curriculum, Pedagogy and Gender

As was shown in the previous chapter, Deneway Primary School had an official policy statement on equality which was referenced twice in its School Brochure. Also, as was noted, the teachers would challenge overt gender stereotyping, as when a student teacher used competition between the boys and girls in Class Y as a way of getting the room tidied quickly.

In Year 6, the pupils undertook a project on gender inequalities. The topic involved a combination of class activities, group work and individual study. The kinds of activities the class engaged in were: an observational and survey study of the local Tesco's, to see who did the shopping; a questionnaire involving the teachers, where they answered three questions to ascertain their knowledge of 'women in society'; and an analysis of representations of women in classroom resources and the media. In addition, curriculum opportunities were provided for co-operative games, knitting, sewing and cooking for all pupils. Despite the school's apparent commitment to 'equal opportunities', in terms of its policy statement and the allocation of curriculum time to a topic on gender, the pedagogy and practices at Deneway were inherently masculine (see Chapter 7).

The research by Kenway *et al.* (1996), into the ways in which equal opportunities/feminist pedagogy is defined and presented, identified two broad approaches: a *therapeutic* approach, whereby attempts are made to 'change' girls or their learning environment through encouraging girls to value themselves and what they do; and an *authoritarian* approach, which delivers its message through "relentless criticism of girls' pleasures and fantasies, and a portrayal of women's lives, . . . as a struggle without relief" (p.252). In a later report on this work (Kenway & Willis, 1998), it was

indicated that this research was based on feminist reform pedagogies put into practice by a few male, but mainly female teachers. The equal opportunities/gender topic was taught at Deneway Primary to Class Y in Year 6 by the class teacher, Bill Naismith, whose approach was different again to either of the two noted by Kenway *et al.*

The strategy used by Bill Naismith was ostensibly based on humour. In one session the class were given a passage entitled 'Jobs for Boys', and were asked to look for, then change, words they believed were sexist, such as "manning", "chairman" and "ladies". When they had completed the task, Bill Naismith went through the answers with them. After the first few words and phrases had been identified and amended, Mr Naismith began to ridicule the task by interspersing supposedly humorous comments:

> Mr. Naismith: I have a friend who thought his name was sexist so he changed it. He used to be called Guy Chapman and now he's Person Personperson. *Field notes*

This was followed a few minutes later by an explanation of the non-sexist title 'Ms.' Here again humour was used to deride the inaccurate and misleading explanation he provided:

> Ms. is used by some ladies who don't want people to know they are married. Hands up those of you who think it's important (several girls' hands go up) . . . now, those of you who don't think it's important (a few boys' hands and a couple of girls' hands go up) . . . and (in a mock exasperated

tone) those of you who don't care! (Many hands go up and there is much laughter from several children and the teacher). *Field notes*

At this point the bell sounded to indicate the end of the school day. Bill Naismith had clearly not intended his statement to be used as a teaching point as, he did not draw the class's attention to his own use of 'ladies' or the implicit sexism in the definition he had provided. Instead, he began to dismiss the class by calling out the names of individual children. When four or five children had left the room, Mr. Naismith called back two of the boys saying:

Gentlemen! Come back here and tidy this table for me. It has to be a gentleman . . .we can't ask the girls can we? (Laughter from himself and the rest of the class). *Field notes*

It can be argued that this particular approach adopted by Bill Naismith towards 'equal opportunities' fulfilled two requisites of hegemonic masculinity: a subordination of the 'other' (females); and the use of humour as a means of establishing and maintaining an individual's masculinity in a male group.

The challenges posed by feminism implied in the topic on 'equal opportunities' generated questions about masculinity and male (primary) teachers. Kenway's (1995) research into male teachers' responses to gender reform practices showed that these initiatives raised issues about teachers' personal and/or professional histories and specific masculine identities which frequently resulted in feelings of anger, resentment and/or anxiety. A way of dealing with these feelings was to subvert the

serious messages feminism had to offer by 'sending them up'. This form of response not only serves to assuage any anxiety but also, and this was the second requisite of Deneway Primary's hegemonic masculinity, making 'humorous' comments *consolidated* heterosexual masculinities. As was argued in Chapter 5, humour is a regulatory technique which structures the performance of masculine identities (Foucault, 1977; Kehily & Nayak, 1997).

There is widespread agreement that teachers' masculine positions are crucial to the hegemonic masculinity of a school and to the relationships which exist within it (Kessler *et al.*, 1985; Abraham, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1996a). Both male class teachers of Class Y 'took up' different masculine positionings, although both were framed within the hegemonic masculinity of the school. Whilst Philip Norris's preferred mode emphasised heterosexuality/'mate-ship', Bill Naismith's approach infused heterosexuality/humour with male assertiveness. The discussion in this chapter will concentrate mainly on the Year 5 teacher, Philip Norris, as it was during the class's time with him that the majority of the observations took place.

Teacher Attitudes

In the same way that the approach adopted by Bill Naismith when teaching the gender topic could be seen to undermine the serious messages of feminism, the classroom management style of Philip Norris also served to subvert the written aims of Deneway Primary School's equal opportunities policy. The previous chapter gave examples of how Philip Norris translated 'fraternization' (Woods, 1990) into classroom practices and relationships. The types of attitudes and behaviours displayed were of the kind where he would show signs of alienation from,

although never actually posing direct challenges to, the official culture of the school. This meant that he occasionally presented himself as a 'school pupil' (see Chapter 7) and, at other times, as 'different' from other teachers in the school by challenging everyday school rules and practices. For example:

> Class Y are moving to their maths groups. Beatrice calls across to Philip Norris, "Mr. N! Where is my maths folder?" I ask her why she calls him Mr. N. She replies, "When we came into his class we started to call him 'Sir' like we do Mr. Kenning but he told us not to. He said he'd like us to call him by his Christian name which is Phil, and we could outside of school, but he thought we'd be in trouble with Mr. Kenning if he heard us . . . so, the boys started calling him Mr. N on the yard (in football) so we all did". *Field notes*

> The teacher is hearing the children read. There are four children sitting around him (Smittie, Lee, Ruth, Saskia). Smittie is reading aloud to Philip Norris who is filling in a sheet (assessment). Philip Norris sighs loudly and says "I've got to fill in these flipping sheets for everybody . . . they're a real nuisance . . . don't worry about it, I don't." Smittie looks bemused. The children did not seem to have been aware any sheet was being completed on them. *Field notes*

Although the 'matey' approach could have been seen as a means of developing less formal teacher-pupil relations, the fact that his strategies were characterised by a 'laddish' form of masculinity had particular implications for the mode of hegemonic masculinity predominant in the

school. This particular 'laddish' form of masculinity is detectable in other studies of schooling (Pollard, 1985a; Walker, 1988; Abraham, 1989), which suggests that it is one of the discourses available to men teachers.

Official statistics continue to reflect the unequal distribution of male teachers across the age ranges, with only a few men in nursery schools (DfEE, 1996). A variety of explanations exist which attempt to explain this situation. There is evidence to suggest that some schools are reluctant to employ men to work with young children, as associations are made between male sexuality and paedophilia (Aspinwall & Drummond, 1989; Skelton, 1991; Cameron, 1997). It has also been argued that men avoid primary teaching because working with young children is perceived as 'women's work' (Steedman, 1988; Burgess & Carter, 1992) and, as such, raises questions about an individual's (heterosexual) masculinity (Skelton, 1991; Allan, 1993). As one of the elementary teachers in Jim Allan's (1993) study argued:

> He (the elementary teacher) had better not be the least bit' feminine. I mean they expect a male teacher to be a man . . . If a man were perceived as feminine, I'm sure it would be a problem . . . You need to be a male role model. Be the opposite of being feminine. (p.123)

Certainly the classroom management approach used by Philip Norris relied upon male/female *difference*, and thereby undermined the lip-service he paid to gender equality. He articulated his approach towards classroom management as one which relied on 'sociability':

> You might expect obedience but then that's not the best environment for learning. So it takes time but I think if you enjoy people's company . . . if you show that then other things follow. (Philip Norris)

The difficulty here is that appeals to humanitarian/liberal approaches to pedagogy and practice can mask gendered actions and behaviours. For example, when discussing his interest and commitment to 'equal opportunities' Philip Norris argued that:

> I just find, in relation to equal opportunities, . . . I'm conscious of how easy it is to do no good or maybe do harm by being quite strident or by just going on about it . . . So I think it's very difficult but I think it's something that shouldn't be addressed in isolation anyway. It's all to do with getting across the ideas of caring for people and mutual tolerance and understanding.

In this line of argument he is equating 'caring' with being free from sexism (Kenway, 1995). Similarly, and more problematically, Philip Norris seemed unaware of the conflict that was created by his verbal commitment to gender equality whilst simultaneously drawing on gender-power *differences* to manage the children in the class. In particular, he utilised heterosexual discourse in his relations with the girls.

Following the PE session referred to in Chapter 7, in which Philip Norris told the girls to get changed quickly because he had his sexy shorts with him and accompanied the comment by wiggling his hips, he said to me:

> I know I flirt . . . its not sexual but gently flirtatious. It isn't harmful to them. *Field notes*

Feminist research into schooling has consistently provided evidence of how girls' sexuality is 'policed' (Jones & Mahony, 1989; Lees, 1986, 1993); however, a review of the research into classroom management shows the extent to which (hetero)sexuality underpins the classroom management of *all* pupils (see for example, Measor & Woods, 1984; Beynon, 1989; Woods, 1990). When the girls in Class Y remarked in interviews that they felt they received more praise for their academic achievements and less disciplining than the boys, they were identifying a pattern recognised as one of the many differential experiences of schooling of girls and boys (Windass, 1989; Measor & Sikes, 1992; Thorne, 1993). Classroom management, in terms of giving praise and verbal disciplinary comments, draws on those discourses which enable ideological and structural domination of some groups over others. For example, Hammersley (1990) shows how the teachers in his study of a boys' school used the strategy of 'showing them up' as the most common form of punishment. The teachers did this by implying a boy had some sort of character defect or was culturally incompetent, specifically in terms of those characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity:

> Clearly, the effectiveness of 'showing up' relies on pupil commitment to the values of *civility, adulthood, manhood* and *intelligence*. (Hammersley, 1990, p.69, my emphasis).

The apparent contradiction between Philip Norris's proclaimed commitment to gender equality and his use of regulatory and

subordinating discourses in his interactions with the girls will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

What has been shown here is that the attitudes and practices of the male teachers subverted the espoused commitment to 'equal opportunities'/gender reform set out in the school's official policy. This is not to say that Bill Naismith or Philip Norris consciously attempted to promulgate discriminatory practices, rather it was more likely that their approaches were related to wider discourses on hegemonic masculinity and schooling, particularly primary schooling. However, whether their actions were conscious or unconscious, the contradictory stance taken on 'equal opportunities'/gender reform in terms of the rhetoric and the reality, presented the girls in Class Y with an irresolvable tension between being a 'normal pupil' and 'being feminine'.

Being a 'Normal Pupil' or 'Being Feminine'?

Using discourses as a way of looking at girls' experiences of schooling has enabled a shift away from essentialist modes of thinking, which locate girls as 'victims', towards one where power relations are seen in a constant state of flux (Davies, 1997). As such, it might be argued that girls' experiences of boys/men teachers will not be coherent and consistent but will vary across a range of situations. To extend this point, it can be suggested that to understand power relations between girls and boys/male teachers in an educational setting requires a knowledge of the particular masculinities which are operating in that school site.

What is being emphasised here is the significance of the modes of masculinity evident in any one school, but this is not to imply that 'how

boys are' is somehow more important than girls' 'ways of being'. As has been argued in earlier chapters, hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to women and to various subordinated masculinities, so, girls' 'ways of being' at school take place within a hegemonic gaze (Hey, 1997). That is, their experiences occur within a framework in which they are located as 'other', and so to understand 'how girls are' at school demands a knowledge of the particular form of hegemonic masculinity operating in any one school, at any one point. So, although a generalised description of schools might be that they are sites which deploy male structures and practices, the *ways* in which girls and boys are *positioned* will vary across school sites. As Alison Jones (1993) explains, in a school which emphasises feminine decorum boisterous girls may be seen as 'naughty' or 'difficult', but in another school where physicality is encouraged these same girls may be perceived as admirably 'stroppy' or, at least, competent. The question here is what did Deneway Primary School consider to be a 'normal pupil' (Brown, 1987) and to what extent was this complementary with what is seen as valuable and desirable in 'being feminine' (Walkerdine, 1989; Hey, 1997)?

In Deneway Primary School's equal opportunities policy, the stated aim was to develop a system which did not discriminate on any basis and which valued "all pupils as individuals in their own right" (p.2). The concept of 'pupils as individuals' was outlined in more detail in the school's official 'Statement of Intent'; a short document displayed in the school and distributed to parents. The 'Statement of Intent' identified what it sought to achieve for in its pupils. That is, for pupils to 'accept responsibility for their own learning', 'develop independence' and to 'assess their own achievements' which the school would develop by 'valuing individual aspirations' and 'promoting self interest and esteem'.

Now, it might be suggested that this image of an independent, self-motivated, critically reflective pupil sits uneasily with the demands made on early adolescent girls to 'become feminine'. Rather, those attributes the school hopes to foster in its' pupils are precisely those associated with hegemonic masculinity; that is, *self-reliance, reason* and *individuality* (Kenway & Fitzclarence, 1997, p. 121). Whilst 'being feminine' does not mean an outright rejection of those characteristics, they do not fit with images of femininity where value is placed on co-operation, empathy and nurturing (Davies, 1989; Walkerdine, 1990). The girls in Class Y were faced with the dilemma described by Valerie Hey (1997), where they were in the position of having to work out:

> . . . how they are to become simultaneously a 'normal' schoolgirl and a 'proper young woman' within the respective cultural institutions of (compulsory) schooling and (compulsory heterosexuality). One institution denies difference whilst the other is fundamentally invested in producing it . . . (p.132)

The expression, a 'normal pupil', is used here to describe those who are middle-class and Anglo and whose culture is positioned centrally in the education they receive (Kenway *et al.*, 1996). Such girls are positioned positively in a school but, at the same time, *how* they can be and *what* they can do are all worked out within a hegemonic gaze. It is possible to illustrate this idea by returning to an example of Philip Norris's approach to classroom management which, in itself, was based on hegemonic masculinity and its most important feature, heterosexuality.

An activity the children often undertook as an introduction to a drama session was acting out a poem or short story. Philip Norris had read out an extract from a poem which called for 'six strong men' and was asked by Beatrice to change it to 'people'. At first he refused to change the word claiming it was 'poetic licence'. Following this interchange, Sarah was 'on' and she appeared to be attempting to challenge the assumption in the poem excerpt that 'strong' was exclusive to maleness:

> Sarah: Hilary, be a 'Macho Lady' . . . I'm not saying 'Macho Man' because she's a lady.
>
> Hilary looks embarrassed and shakes her head.
>
> Sarah: OK. . . . Marie.
>
> Marie looks down and shakes her head, as does Beatrice when asked. Sarah abandons this activity and instead asks Beatrice to 'be a singer' which she does enthusiastically. *Field notes*

The reason why Hilary refused to act in a 'male' way is not known, but it might be that, as one of the girls identified by Philip Norris as preferring to keep out of the spotlight, she felt particularly uncomfortable in being asked to act out of character. Interestingly, two girls perceived as 'Confident' were also reluctant. It may be suggested that whilst challenging masculine behaviours was seen as acceptable by Marie and Sarah, portraying oneself as in some way unfeminine was not. A prime motivator is wanting to demonstrate 'sameness' within friendship groups, which leads both girls and boys to adopt safe behaviours which are within traditional gender conventions (Askew & Ross, 1989; Kenway *et al.*, 1997).

These 'safe behaviours' differed according to whether 'quiet' or 'confident' strategies were adopted.

By his own admittance, Philip Norris adopted a flirtatious manner in his relationships with the girls in the class. This involved, showing off (preening) and 'mock attacks' (Morris, 1978). These mock attacks from male to female imply both intimacy and simultaneously act as a reminder of male violence. Some girls would utilise 'quiet' strategies to deal with this, by appearing to be compliant and even admiring but simultaneously adopting avoidance strategies; for example, physically moving to the margins of the classroom in order to avoid what could be interpreted as instances of male violence:

> Following a technology session the children are tidying away. Philip Norris asks Hilary to put the pots of glue on the side bench. He then asks her if the waste paper bin is near her, to which she says yes. He stands on a chair and says "Hold it up and I'll throw it from here." He throws a piece of paper into the bin. She says "Well done" and moves to the other side of the classroom. Philip Norris follows her and taps her on the head a few times with two pencils, then hands them to her. Hilary smiles and puts them in a pencil pot. *Field notes*

> The teacher (PN) is sawing a piece of wood . . . he picks up a ruler to measure the wood. Kyoko goes up to him and asks a question. He pretends to hit her hard with the ruler but actually brings the action up short as it nears her shoulder so

the result is a light tap. She laughs and walks away. *Field notes*

Those girls who demonstrated a preference for 'quiet' strategies succeeded in avoiding much of the heterosexualised management style of Philip Norris by living in the margins of the classroom. Adopting 'confident' strategies was something of a risk as Philip Norris vacillated between two roles; for the most part he relied on being a 'typical lad' in managing the class, but occasionally his actions engendered an over-familiar response and he would then move into 'authoritarian teacher' mode. His flirtatious behaviour revolved around verbal comments and mock attacks. One of the 'confident' strategies used to respond to his 'typical lad' approach was to flirt and extend the use of mock attacks to actual physical contact:

The class is playing rounders. Philip Norris says "Right everybody we're going to get Deborah out." The boys get her out on the first post. She walks up to the teacher and smacks him on the bottom. He laughs. *Field notes*

Coming back from the swimming baths on the coach . . . Saskia gets out some photographs of herself and shows Maggie. Philip Norris is in the seat in front and he turns and takes them from her. He says "This is Saskia smiling" and uses his fingers to pull his mouth out into a distorted grin. Saskia hits him on the shoulder and says "Don't!" He looks at another photograph and attracts one of the boy's attention saying laughingly "Mac, look at this one!" Saskia bends over the seat towards the teacher, hits him again and says quietly,

"Shut up". The teacher hands her the photographs back laughingly. *Field notes*

The challenge to his authority as a teacher by individual girls using 'confident' strategies did not appear to provoke any shift away from 'laddishness' to authoritarian teacher, but when more than one girl became involved this seemed to pose a threat which had to be redressed. For example, in Chapter 7 attention was drawn to a drama session in which the class were carrying out an activity which involved giving a person an action to imitate. Following on from the instruction given to Philip Norris by one of the boys, Michael, to mime 'putting a condom on', which he changed to 'be a Viking', the teacher ran across the circle to Saskia:

> . . . picks her up and runs back across to his place saying "Taking a hostage". Saskia screams out as she is picked up and Beatrice stands up as if to help her. When Saskia returns to her place she calls to the teacher "Mr. N!". He looks and she pokes her tongue out at him. Marie has her arm round Saskia's shoulders and also pokes her tongue out, then starts to speak to Saskia. After a few seconds Philip Norris shouts "Marie! I'm fed up of waiting for you to be quiet - wait outside." She turns bright red and walks out mouthing "What'd I do?" Philip Norris says he will speak to her later. *Field notes*

For the next couple of days any interactions Marie had with Philip Norris were noticeably icy, but she gave no reason for him to reprimand her. On the third day, Philip Norris attempted to reduce the obvious tension

between them by being humorous, at least ostensibly. What he did was to publicly declaim his (hetero)sexual power to all the girls and simultaneously underline Marie's powerlessness in the situation. On this occasion, the class was taking part in a co-operative game which involved working in small mixed-sex groups to put together the pieces of a map. Each child had four pieces and they had to share their information but were not allowed to speak. After the game had been in progress for a few minutes, Philip Norris stopped them and said:

> How do you feel about doing this without speaking? I can see certain dominant people loving the game if they could talk. I can just see Marie saying "Isn't this great, . . .give me that piece, give me that!" (teacher makes excited grabbing movements in the air, bouncing up and down on his chair). Marie mutters something under her breath and looks very displeased. The teacher goes up to her and pretends to punch her in the face but actually puts his hand up by her cheek and hits that. *Field notes*

It has to be noted that the actions of the boys did not invite the same kinds of response. When the boys asked Philip Norris to act out 'putting a condom on', or implying a note he'd received from the female teacher of Year 2 was a love letter, there was laughter based on shared understandings of appropriate and 'normal' (that is, heterosexual) male behaviours (Jackson, 1990; Connell, 1995).

As the year progressed the use of 'confident' strategies by any of the girls became less pronounced and, instead, a different type of strategy emerged which centred around moves to subvert the 'male gaze' (Skeggs, 1991a).

Where females have been the object of gaze, research literature demonstrates instances of girls reversing this technique. In his interpretation of this literature, Woods (1990) has suggested that teachers lack of respect for pupils might be reflected in their appearance:

> Davies' (1984) girls were 'incensed by "dirty teachers - any who wore scruffy suits, . . . whose hair stuck up on end' or who showed a lack of propriety in appearance or behaviour (p.29). Dubberley's (1988:191) girls, similarly, criticized a teacher for being 'dead scruffy . . . filthy . . . Greasy hair - nobbut Oxfam clothes'. (p. 18).

When the original texts from which these extracts are examined it appears that, in both cases, these are comments made by *girls* of their *male* teachers. So an alternative interpretation of these comments is that the girls showed disapproval of the attitudes or behaviours of their male teachers by reversing the heterosexual, hegemonic gaze. The central means through which the girls in Class Y demonstrated disapproval of Philip Norris was by focusing on his physical appearance. Given that a feature of his 'laddish' masculinity was not dressing along conventional, professional teacher lines, he responded to the girls' frequent comments about his clothes either by laughing or ignoring what was said. At the same time, these criticisms of his appearance appeared to be interrelated with his authority as a 'proper teacher':

> Marie and Sarah have opted out of playing cricket in PE. Marie watches Philip Norris:
>
> Marie: Mr. N. never tucks his shirt in.

Sarah: He never does any ironing either.

CS: How do you know?

Sarah: Cos he's lazy.

Marie: He always wears jogging pants, never trousers.

CS: Does that matter?

Marie: Yes . . . we had to fill in a form once and it asked what you would change about your teacher. I said he should wear smarter clothes. Mr. Coles (the Year 6 teacher) wears trousers and ties.

Sarah: He does wear trousers sometimes.

Marie: Only cords . . . he only wears proper clothes when he's going for an interview.

CS: Why do you want him to wear proper clothes?

Marie: Because it's embarrassing . . . if someone comes into your classroom and sees him and everyone's carrying on and he's letting them get away with it . . .

Sarah: Yeah . . . not like a proper teacher would.

Field notes

In interviews with the girls in Year 6, when Philip Norris had left the school, several of them reiterated this point:

Marie: With Mr. Norris we all could shout and everybody could talk back and get away with it . . .

Holly: He used to dress like a cowboy, like in Texas, like in the middle of a desert . . .

CS: Does it matter what a teacher looks like?

Chorus: Yes!

Marie: His clothes all came from Oxfam.

Holly: It was just like the last day he was dead smart.

Saskia: He used to wear these red and green trousers.

Holly: But the last day he had a bow tie on and everything.

Saskia: Showing off!

Holly: Yes, but if he'd dressed up a bit then he wouldn't have had the kids giving him . . . talking back an' that.

Sarah: Well at first we tried to tell him . . . d'ya remember me writing on the board that morning "We hate your

> trousers" and when Marie and Deborah came off holiday they bought him a tie?

It has been argued that when girls tackle the kinds of masculine heterosexual strategies employed by boys/men, such as flirting, by flirting, they are becoming implicated in the normalisation of masculinity and the policing of their own behaviours (Halson, 1989; Mahony, 1985; Kelly, 1989). However, as Skeggs' (1991a) study of females in a further education college showed, the students refused to be rendered powerless. A similar process happened here in that, over the course of the year, the use of 'confident' strategies, which to a certain extent colluded with the flirtatious behaviour of Philip Norris, dwindled and were replaced with masculinised strategies which provided some degree of power. Given their position as (young) school pupils and females, that power was constrained and, in effect, the most it achieved was to neutralise the consequence of their powerlessness as they were unable to challenge the prerogatives of power.

Where both 'quiet' and 'confident' strategies drew on female sexual discourses when engaging with male teachers' behaviours, the tactics favoured by Maggie were more conventionally 'masculine'. The reasons why Maggie rejected these strategies are not known, but one contributory factor may have been her physical appearance. She was by far the tallest girl in the class and broadly built. As Skeggs (1991a) has observed elsewhere, for some girls their perceptions of their physical appearance means that flirting is not an option for them. Also, as Connell (1995) points out:

> Though most discussion of masculinity is silent about the issue, it follows from both psychoanalytic and social construction principles that women are bearers of masculinity as well as men. (p230)

Maggie chose to either ignore or directly challenge Philip Norris. This placed her in the position of being actively disliked by both the teacher and the majority of the girls. In interviews the reasons given for this dislike centred on her 'otherness' (Epstein, 1993; Nayak & Kehily, 1996):

> Philip Norris: . . . the biggest problem in the class is Maggie who doesn't tend to get chosen (for team activities), and she must be quite sensitive of that, but she brings it on herself . . . she's a little bit bossy and can be aggressive.

Similarly, several of the girls also implied her 'aggressiveness' rendered her as 'unfemale' and, therefore, unacceptable. In an interview with a group of the girls when they were in Year 6, they began to talk about their impressions of Philip Norris, who by this time had left the school:

> Holly: He wouldn't tell you off even if we stomped out of the room and saying all these swear words . . .
>
> Saskia: (shocked) I never did anything like that! I never sweared at him . . . nor you!
>
> Holly: (laughing) No, we wouldn't, none of us girls would, but someone did!

Marie: Maggie did . . . she just uses the teacher, she goes 'No' and things like that . . .

Many of the girls said in interviews that aspects of the boys' behaviours they disliked were 'showing off' and bullying/being bossy. The dislike of Maggie was articulated in similar terms, however, the fact that Maggie also couched her dislike of many of the boys and girls in the same way suggests that it was not the actual actions themselves, rather the strategies adopted in dealing with those actions, that generated feelings of 'inappropriate/unfeminine' behaviours. For example, all of the girls commented that one of the ways the boys 'showed off' was always having to have the last word, whereas they would ignore what was said or walk away. They adopted the same strategies with Maggie:

CS: Why do you say you don't like Maggie . . . that she 'uses' you?

Holly: She's horrible . . . dead bossy.

Beatrice: She acts like you're a kid and tells you what to do.

CS: What do you do when that happens?

Beatrice: Avoid her.

In contrast, Maggie would stand her ground. Interestingly, the fact that some of the girls did not like her did not engender her dislike:

CS: Who do you like in the class?

Maggie: Deborah, Holly, Beth.

Beth: Yes, Holly's fun.

CS: What about the others?

Maggie: Well, no names, but I don't like some because they boss everybody around and everything.

CS: How do you deal with it if they boss you around?

Maggie: I just tell them to "Shut up".

Beth: Yes, you do, I just ignore them.

CS: What about you Hilary, how do you deal with it?

Hilary: I just try to ignore 'em.

It would seem then that Maggie did not conform to what was demanded in 'being feminine', although she was living up to the ideals of the school in terms of demonstrating characteristics sought for in Deneway School pupils. However, those characteristics were, as has been shown, relative to the hegemonic masculinity of the school, which set up an irresolvable tension. Maggie could not be a 'normal schoolgirl' because she was not 'properly feminine'. As Valerie Hey (1997) has argued, girls' practices have as their major aim the making of feminine identity or reputation and insist on them making each other into acceptable selves. This takes place within the superordinate gaze of hegemonic masculine culture:

> In very many respects they did the work of that culture amongst and between themselves in positioning each other into particular places. (Hey, 1997, p.131)

Herein lay the irresolvable tension for the girls in Class Y, between being a 'normal pupil' and 'being feminine'.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the tensions which emerged in one primary school between the written equal opportunities policy and its translation into educational practice. There is a limited amount of information on *how* schools actively articulate equal opportunities policies, and what is available tends to focus on secondary education and feminist pedagogy implemented by female teachers (Kenway, 1995; Kenway *et al.*, 1996). The attitudes of teachers have been argued to be of central importance regarding the construction, negotiation and re-construction of a school's *gender regime* (Connell *et al.*, 1982; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). As such, the attitudes, behaviours and approaches of male teachers in the implementation of equal opportunities initiatives are significant both in terms of the form of hegemonic masculinity developed in the school, and how boys and girls negotiate and challenge that particular mode of hegemonic masculinity. In the case of Deneway Primary School, the pedagogical approaches of the male teachers served to subvert the intended aims of the school's equal opportunities policy.

A particular tension was generated for the girls between the school's written understanding of a 'normal pupil' and wider discourses on 'being feminine'. The definitions provided in Deneway Primary's 'Statement of

Intent' drew on characteristics which have been associated with hegemonic masculinities and, therefore, did not sit easily with those attributes linked with 'being feminine'. The global subordination of women by men (Connell, 1987) means that recognition and acceptance is given to those females who outwardly align themselves in accordance with, and what is expected by, the 'hegemonic gaze'. Hence, the majority of girls in Class Y negotiated their position in the classroom, and in their relationships, from their position as 'female'. Girls such as Maggie who present themselves firstly as a 'normal pupil' run the risk of being seen as an 'other' by both teachers and peers.

This chapter has shown that being a 'normal schoolgirl' is inscribed with heterosexual meaning. It is recognised in the discussion here, and reiterated elsewhere in this thesis, that discourses differ across schools and therefore the comments made regarding the positioning of the girls at Deneway are not generalisable to other primary schools. The situation at Deneway Primary was that the school aspired to develop pupils in ways which had clear resonances with hegemonic masculinity, thereby creating a difficulty for how the girls could 'be'. Being and becoming a 'normal schoolgirl' was worked out within a hegemonic gaze and the greater value and emphasis placed on 'being feminine' meant that girls were positioned in such a way that time and effort had to be invested in avoiding any potential for being seen as an 'outsider' or 'other'.

PAGES

MISSING

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ORIGINAL

SECTION 4

CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to consider two questions:

- What part does the primary school play in constructing, challenging and re-constructing forms of masculinities and male practices?

- If schools are sites where multiple modes of masculinities are constructed, negotiated, challenged and re-constructed what do these 'look like' in terms of male actions, behaviours and attitudes in the primary classroom?

In order to explore these questions a theoretical model was used which had a number of levels: structural; political/ideological; cultural; institutional; sub-cultural; biographical; contextual; interactional. To understand what was going on, each level had to be looked at in its own right as a complex set of social processes and practices. Each level interrelated, but there was no suggestion of a linear flow or chronological development. The notion of critical incidents was employed to consider how social processes came together in specific combinations in order to consider and explore hegemonic and other modes of masculinities. Several critical incidents occurred at both schools which indicated a similarity in the themes to be considered. A couple of examples from each case study school will illustrate this.

Benwood Primary School was a difficult building to enter once the school was in session. The school was the constant target of attack and teachers themselves had been threatened and assaulted by parents. Thus, the school's relationship with the local community was based partly on fear. At the same time, discussions between teachers indicated that they viewed parents as 'children' who themselves needed parenting. So, the relationship between the school and local community was also informed by maternalism/paternalism. An exploration of this tension drew attention to the relationships between parents and schools, assumed by educational reforms, which schools like Benwood Primary could not fulfil.

Another critical incident at Benwood Primary involved the children's interactions with known and unfamiliar teachers. Having observed the children behaving badly whenever an unknown teacher took them, the day a part-time (and to them, unfamiliar) teacher gained attention and control by identifying herself as someone who had taught their older siblings, pointed to what was understood by 'authority' and how this was exercised as another theme to explore. Again, this meant considering the relationships between schools and the local community and the generation of management/control strategies by Benwood Primary.

Two critical incidents which arose during the study of Deneway Primary were, firstly, the discovery that the 'Star' footballers all preferred alternative, individual sporting activities to the one they were given status in the school for; and, secondly, the absence of any sexual harassment by the boys of the girls despite the 'model' set by the teacher. These incidents pointed to the need to explore the ways in which relationships in individual classrooms were informed and managed between teachers and pupils.

To return to the two research questions, the findings of the case studies indicated that a basic answer to both research questions is "It depends"; that is, it depends upon:

- factors relating to access to mechanisms of power, particularly relationships with parents and the local community;

- discourses within which members of the school and locality are positioned;

- attitudes of the teachers, particularly in relation to organisation and management.

Each of these points will be expanded upon, but what is crucial to an understanding of the findings of this study is the *contextualisation* of those findings; that is, the way in which the research questions were approached and the framework within which they were explored. The research was approached from a feminist standpoint and from that two main issues emerged. Specifically, what was 'knowable' in the particular circumstances of the research; and the political imperative which underpins feminist research. This concluding chapter will, first of all, set out the broad findings of the case studies. It will then move on to consider the significance of the research framework on these findings and what can be learned from this in terms of future research and for current debates on boys' underachievement.

Parents and Schools in 'Partnership'

The research undertaken in two primary schools in the city of Oldchester was not intended as a comparative study but as individual case studies. At the same time, the radical changes introduced by the ERA 1988 affected all state schools. These educational reforms were experienced differently in the two schools with the greatest impact on the *gender regime* of Benwood Primary School. The aspect of ERA which was argued in the study of Benwood Primary to have made a significant contribution to the configuration of hegemonic masculinity in the school was the transference of power from LEAs and schools to parents. As was said earlier, the Act advocated a 'partnership' between parents and schools assuming that parents would want to take an active role in the management of their children's school. It was further assumed in the Act that those that did would have access to those mechanisms of power which could provide the necessary support for the school; that is, administrative and financial skills. A consequence of this absence of partnership for Benwood Primary was that the school was placed in a particularly vulnerable situation in terms of its own survival. With regard to both the numbers of children it could 'attract', and its position in the local community as a target for theft and vandalism, Benwood Primary had to struggle to maintain its existence.

As a vulnerable institution, the school attempted to 'defend' itself by putting into place physical barriers (such as security devices and locking most of the entrance doors), and by using control and management strategies which reflected those exercised by the dominant group in the local community. That is, the actions and behaviours of the 'lads', who were the dominant group in the local vicinity, which were informed by a

violent, competitive, controlling mode of masculinity. The intimidating aspects of this ascendant form of masculinity were reflected in the control and management strategies used by the teachers in the school. It has been argued that the teachers did not 'choose' these intimidatory management strategies but that these were perceived as the only sort available to them.

In some ways the educational reforms of the late 1980s had less of an impact on the *gender regime* of Deneway Primary. The partnership model envisaged in the reforms was already in existence, and the entrepreneurial headteacher was able to maximise the benefits for the school through having an articulate, organised, middle-class school governing body. The shared values of the local middle-class community and the school included a notional commitment to 'equal opportunities' in its broadest sense. However, the *gender regime* of Deneway Primary was mobilised around and dominated by characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. The main conveyors of the dominant mode of masculinity were the male teachers who occupied the status positions in the school (headteacher and the two teachers of the oldest children). In many ways the male camaraderie which existed as a means of managing relationships with pupils was reminiscent of that of an exclusive 'Golf Club' where girl pupils were positioned in a different and subordinate place to that of boys.

A significant question which emerges is whether such relationships between schools and local communities would have existed regardless of the demands made by ERA for partnerships between parents and schools. It is, of course, impossible to draw any accurate conclusions but it might be suggested that whilst the *types* of relationships would have been in place irrespective of ERA, the demands made by it exacerbated existing relationships between Benwood Primary and parents. The headteacher

had found it an impossible task to put together a school governing body which included parents whose children were at the school. Given that governing bodies were to be the mainstay of schools the lack of designated governors involved the headteacher in extensive canvassing and negotiations as to possible alternative structuring. At the end of the data collection period this problem had not been resolved.

It can also be argued that, in contrast, the relationship between the parents and Deneway Primary was simply enabled and legislated for. Although the school had only just opened parents were actively involved in fund raising (as well as contributing in other practical ways) for the benefit of the school. The point made here is that it is unlikely that ERA brought about different relationships between schools and local communities but it appears that it enshrined them and, by handing over financial and management power to school governing bodies, made some schools like Benwood Primary more vulnerable whilst simultaneously strengthening the existing positive position of others such as Deneway Primary.

The locale of a school was, then, shown to be important in both case studies. Also of crucial importance to the construction of dominant modes of masculinities (and femininities) in the schools were the discourses within which members of the school and locality were positioned.

Discourses and Primary Schooling

It is not the intention here to rehearse the discussion in the main text which details the tensions experienced for pupils between being, for example, positioned as a *boy* and a *school pupil*. Rather, the aim is to bring to attention that these discourses, and those of being a *girl, child, white,*

middle-class, 'under-class', primary teacher, man, etc., operated and were understood *differently* in the two schools. An example will demonstrate this idea. At Deneway Primary School value was placed on 'school boys' who supported the school, did some work, did not engage in challenging or confrontational behaviour, but who could 'have a laugh'. Such boys were able to access the benefits the educational system offered and secured the goodwill of the teachers. In Class B at Benwood Primary school there was one boy, Robert, who fulfilled Deneway Primary's understanding of a 'normal' school boy. However, Benwood Primary had a different understanding of a 'school boy' which was one who was confrontational, required tremendous encouragement to work and needed socialising into schooling. It was boys such as Shane and John who were able to access the reward system of the school, which was geared towards enhancing children's 'self-esteem' (as understood by the teachers), by occasionally demonstrating they could cooperate with the school's expectations. Robert was rarely able to access any benefits from Benwood Primary simply because the school was not geared up to encouraging such children.

The main group through which the discourses of the school were mediated was the teachers. The discussion in the following section is on teacher attitudes as a major influence on the construction of dominant modes of masculinities in the school

Hegemonic Masculinity and Teacher Attitudes

As was illustrated in the study of Benwood Primary School, it was not necessary for a teacher to be male to make use of disciplinary strategies most often associated with masculinity, such as intimidation and

aggression, as was shown by the actions of the acting headteacher, Mrs. Masterson. At the same time, the study of Deneway Primary showed that being a male teacher does not necessarily mean that authoritarian strategies will be adopted. However, the approaches used by Philip Norris, Bill Naismith and Stephen Coles at Deneway Primary could be argued to have been 'masculine' in that they all adopted class management strategies based on a presumed shared interest with the boys (football). Also, in the case of Philip Norris, class management of the girls was strongly informed by heterosexual attitudes and behaviours.

In several chapters, attention has been drawn to both published literature and to the findings of this present study of the importance of teacher attitudes for constructions of masculinities in school sites. What seem to be the crucial findings of this study are:

- the extent to which hegemonic masculinity is dominant in the *gender regime* of each school

- the differences between the forms of hegemonic masculinity of two schools situated only five miles apart.

To take each point in turn; the fact that reference is often made to the 'feminisation of primary schooling' (Burgess & Carter, 1992; Acker, 1995; Thornton, 1996) indicates that the primary school, both in terms of teachers and the ways in which the environment is organised, is predominantly female-biased. However, even where there is a minority of boys and male teachers, masculinist discourses still predominate. The study by Kenway & Willis (1998) of thirty Australian schools has argued that "the capacity of boys and men to be dominant is not just a matter of

numbers but a complex interplay of institutional, student and community cultures" (p. 126). As they found in their study, and was evident at Benwood Primary School, both male and female teachers and pupils regularly access dominant discourses of masculinity.

The second issue raised earlier, referring to the differences in the hegemonic masculinity of the two primary schools, also points to the importance of teacher attitudes. At Deneway Primary the male teachers, for reasons discussed in Chapter 7, adopted a 'matey' approach to classroom management which set up a particular camaraderie with the boys. Given the success of 'partnership' with parents, it can be argued that there was greater flexibility for the teachers at Deneway Primary to draw on different modes of masculinities than at Benwood Primary. To refer to Kenway & Willis (1998) again, they observed that those schools which exhibited "a quite explicit flaunting of macho behaviour" (p.126) constrained the opportunities of boys to take-up alternative kinds of masculine behaviours:

> For many boys in such environments, there is only one form of acceptable masculinity available to them and they reject it at their peril. Within this dominant form of masculinity, the need to assert dominance and control and to confirm the pecking order is extreme. . . Only rarely in our schools was the behaviour of boys linked to the 'masculinising cultures' of both the school and community. (Kenway & Willis, 1998, p.126-127).

Although the original intention was to focus the study of masculinities and primary schooling on one site the circumstances which resulted in a

study of two schools located in two different social class areas of the same city enabled a comparison of the causal processes involved in constructions of masculinities. These processes are those discussed throughout this chapter regarding the significance of the locale of the school, the impact of ERA on school/community relationships and the attitudes of male teachers. It has been shown in this study how these contribute towards the 'masculinising cultures' of schools which has recently become a major focus of those concerned with boys' underachievement. Before going on to discuss the implications of the findings of this study for gender reform policies and strategies it is important to contextualise these findings in terms of the research framework.

Generalisability and this Study

> Feminism acknowledges that (-) 'truths' are situated, temporary and political and will change over time. . . feminists must be sensitive to the possible dangerousness of their truths - they must trouble themselves as much as their 'others'. (Kenway & Willis, 1998, p. xix)

If I had been starting this research in the late 1990s I would undoubtedly be asking different questions to the ones I was asking at the beginning of the 1990s. One reason for this is that, as the table in Chapter 1 suggested, prevalent discourses in gender and education have shifted during this time from one which emphasised identity politics to one which places emphasis on male disadvantage, specifically boys' underachievement. The questions that are asked and the 'knowledge' that the researcher brings to bear which informs what is 'knowable' in the analysis of the data

is historically, culturally, socially and psychically specific. This raises problems for the concept of generalisability of the findings.

The question of the extent to which the findings of the case studies could be generalised to other schools had been implicitly raised in Chapters 2 and 3 in the discussion of research methodology and processes. When I began writing this concluding chapter I came across the chapter by Paul Connolly (1998b) which addressed many of the issues I wish to discuss here. In order to acknowledge this work and avoid 're-inventing the wheel', I will engage directly with Connolly's work.

It was said in Chapter 3 that there is an ongoing debate about whether the findings of an ethnographic study could, or indeed should, be generalisable. The concern by some feminists for epistemological issues in research suggests that attempts to generalise from ethnographies would be "dancing to the wrong tune" (Connolly, 1998b, p.122). He goes on to say:

> It is a 'tune' that has come to dominate the social sciences because of the desire of social researchers to claim their work as scientific. This form of 'scientism' as Sayer (1992) terms it, involves social researchers attempting to emulate the methods and procedures of the natural sciences. (p. 125)

Feminists have long challenged 'objective' approaches to research on the basis that these are conventionally defined in terms of 'male' knowledge and understandings, and feminists have also questioned whether any research can indeed be 'objective' (Bowles & Duelli Klein, 1983; Harding, 1987). When it is recognised that ethnography is about exploring the

meanings that groups and individuals attach to their own and others' actions, and that the researcher her/himself brings their own knowledge, understandings and interpretations to bear on the participants' actions and explanations', then it is clear that only a partial picture can be obtained. If, then, ethnography can only ever present a partial account of any situation, and the findings of that account cannot be generalised to other situations, then the question arises of "What value has ethnography?"

Skeggs (1997) redefines conventional understandings of what is understood by 'validity' and 'generalisability' when she says that an account should be "convincing, credible and cogent in which the analysis made can be evaluated as rigorous and responsible and the account given substantial and satisfactory" (p. 32). This argument is in keeping with Connolly (1998b) where he points out that the value of ethnography is in identifying and understanding a number of *causal* processes. He goes on to say that when the focus is shifted away from 'generalisability' and on to the notion of *relevance,* the way of assessing the value of ethnographies is changed:

> . . . we should begin to see the findings of ethnographic research for what they are - insights into particular social processes and practices that exist within a specific location - in our case the school. The findings can be directly applicable to that school at that time but not to any other. However, this does not mean that the findings are not relevant to other schools. It may well be that some of the processes found in one school are also to be found in another. Rather than assuming this to be the case, however, such applicability needs to be empirically tested (-). Thus in

relation to the schooling experiences of black students, Wright (1986) found that they were adversely effected, in her school, by excessive disciplinary control from teaching staff. This finding has since provided a 'resource' or sensitizing device which has been used by a number of other studies to help them ascertain and empirically test whether similar processes were occurring in their schools . . . In this sense the relevance of successive ethnographic studies is found in the way that they cumulatively provide an ever-increasing catalogue of particular social processes and practices which researchers can draw upon to help sensitize them to and consequently identify the complex range of processes that could be occurring in their school. (p. 135)

Reconsidering the way ethnographies can be understood, and used to inform future research and educational practice, challenges traditional 'malestream' approaches to research which sets out to prove or disprove existing theories. As Anderson, Hughes and Sharrock (1985) maintained some years ago, what criticising each others' theoretical positions "does not do is establish that one party is right and the other wrong, only that they see things differently" (p. 72). Instead they, together with feminists (Stanley & Wise, 1990) argue that researchers should 'read generously' each others' work.

This approach is evident in the work on 'race' and schooling (Gillborn, 1998; Connolly, 1998a). Similarly, although ethnographic research on masculinities and primary schooling is limited, from what does exist, it can be seen that some studies are revealing complementary causal processes. For example, those studies by Troyna and Hatcher (1992) and

Connolly (1998a), and indeed the findings of this present study, point to how the broader societal discourses on 'race' and gender are mediated through, and influenced by, social relations in local communities which, in turn, are factored into the dynamics of school practices. A further example is the way in which football has been shown in the studies of Connolly, (1994a) and Renold (1997), and again in this present study, to be used by schools as a means of controlling boys whilst, at the same time, promoting male camaraderie, status and exclusivity.

It is fair to say that these studies share common methodological and theoretical approaches. However, that does not explain the commonality of findings; and also raises further points about how ethnographies can be understood and used. Researchers should not only be considering the findings of studies, but should also be considering the differences and similarities of methodological approaches in order to explain the 'knowledge' that has been produced.

The point that has been made here is that demands for ethnographies to be 'generalisable' belong to a particular, 'malestream', scientific view of the world. Ethnography is always limited by the context and mode of production but as Connolly (1998b) says "ethnography can be relevant without succumbing to the need to generalize" (p. 139). In the current political climate which criticises much educational research, particularly that into 'race' and gender, (Reynolds, 1998; Tooley, 1998) for its inability to ground itself in practical classroom application, the remaining issue which I want to explore is the relevance of this present ethnography for ways of approaching studies of masculinities and schooling and the more recent concept of boys' underachievement.

As was stated at the outset, there are remarkably few studies of masculinities and primary schooling and those undertaken by feminists (Jordan, 1995; Renold, 1997; Francis, 1998) have not actively addressed the issues which arise from being a woman researching boys/men. The 'cultural strangeness' which Davies (1984) remarked upon of a male researcher exploring the experiences of young women at school has echoes in this research, for example, by enabling a querying of male relationships to the game of football. By researching masculinities and schooling, feminists can, not only, provide alternative, but complementary, perspectives to research being undertaken by men in schools but also ensure that the insights offered by feminism into inequalities in educational processes secures a central place in data collection and analysis.

Of particular significance here is, as implied earlier, the recognition in feminist methodology of the researcher to constantly interrogate her own position in the research process and how 'knowledge'/findings are generated. I have demonstrated in these two case studies the potential impact (both disruptive and enabling) of a female researcher working with boys and men teachers. My relationship with the boys at Benwood Primary as an adult-woman, part-time teacher presented an opportunity to explore ways in which sexually harassing behaviours may be developed in the school setting whilst also alerting other feminist researchers to the dangers of 'reading off' certain behaviours based on our own experiences and expectations. Similarly, my relationship with the male teachers at Deneway Primary, particularly Philip Norris, illuminated the notion that men primary teachers constructions of masculinities are undertaken in an

environment which is noted for its 'feminization' (Steedman, 1988). There is clearly a need for more research to be undertaken into the *masculinities* of primary men teachers as the findings of this research indicate that they provide one of the most significant means through which dominant modes of masculinities are conveyed.

The final section considers current debates on boys' underachievement and discusses how this study contributes towards a more informed understanding of the complex issues involved.

Gender Reform and Boys' Underachievement

Although gender reforms have been developed and implemented since the late 1980s there is very little evidence of how these are taught in schools and received by pupils. The recent study by Kenway and Willis (1998) sheds some light on this area, and makes several pertinent points:

- existing gender reform seems to imply that all boys are successful, advantaged and powerful;

- an implicit assumption in gender reform strategies is that the major cause of gender inequality is ignorance on the part of pupils (and teachers). Therefore, disseminating knowledge about how gender inequalities operate will overcome injustices

- there is a presumption in the majority of gender reforms that knowing about gender issues and relations means that teachers will be able to teach about such matters.

This raises a number of questions regarding ways of understanding and tackling boys' underachievement at school. Firstly, *is* there a case for boys' underachievement as a general principle?

An analysis of educational achievement in GCSEs and 'A' levels suggests than an increased entry by girls into certain 'male' subjects such as the sciences, together with a closing gender-performance gap in most subjects at GCSE, partly explains why girls' attainments appear to have rapidly exceeded those of boys (Arnot, David & Weiner, 1996). Also, as was said in Chapter 1, a focus on examination performance omits both the fact that the patterns of improvements for girls up to the age of 16 are not so clear-cut post-16, and that the analyses of examination results are concerned only with a small section of pupils, therefore they are not a straightforward indicator of what schooling does or does not achieve for *all* children (Yates, 1997). Kenway and Willis say that:

> Grades are only the start, not the end of the story. Does girls' alleged or actual success at school still mean their failure after school and does boys' actual or alleged failure still mean their success? This is a rhetorical question because it is undeniable that males continue to be more powerful than females in broad structural terms and this makes the idea that the boys' issue is an equity issue rather laughable. Clearly educational equity issues are involved, but for particular groups of boys - Aboriginal, working class, 'under class', homeless, rural and so on - not all boys. To say it is not a general equity issue is not to deny that boys have problems, nor is it to deny that there are educational issues

> involved. . . But what are they and how is boys' gender pertinent? (p. 51)

They go on to argue that the discourse of gender reform needs to move away from 'girl-versus-boy' terminology and to ask "What is it about masculinities and femininities and their relationship to certain aspects of schooling that leads certain boys and certain girls to systematically fail?" or "What is it that leads schooling to systematically fail certain socio/cultural groupings of boys and girls?" (p. 62)

Thus, it can be seen that the relevance of the findings of this study and other ethnographic studies of primary schooling to explorations of boys' underachievement is that they are able to offer insights into specific causal processes which influence constructions of masculinities in school sites. For example, that this study of masculinities and primary schools, and those of Renold (1997) and Connolly (1998a) have observed the significance of football for control and management strategies of boys alerts schools to the potential alienating effects this can have for girls as well as promoting particular dominant modes of masculinity. These strategies to encourage 'self-esteem' have a number of effects which, far from promoting 'achievement', maintain a status quo whereby girls are marginalised and *some* boys are provided with access to educational and social benefits. An understanding of these causal processes enables the development of more appropriate gender reform policies. The current approach to boys' underachievement appears to be a 'hotch-potch', for the most part, strategies appear to be developed and implemented without any understanding of the 'masculinising cultures' of the school and local community.

The findings of this study lends support to the views of Kenway and Willis (1998) and highlights the importance of two apparently distinct areas sharing processes and practices. That is, it appears from articles appearing in the *Times Educational* Supplement and the innumerable books and packs entitled *Raising Boys' Achievement* (Bradford, 1997; Pickering, 1997; Bleach, 1998; QCA, 1998) that masculinity is an unproblematic construction; that *it* (sic) is shaped and formed through biological/cognitive processes and parents and teachers of boys simply need to reconsider current childrearing/classroom management practices (Biddulph, 1997; Bleach, 1998). A dialogue between researchers investigating the dynamic and complex ways in which masculinities are constructed *differently* in *different* school sites and those seeking to develop strategies to address 'boys' underachievement' would enable more informed approaches. For example, a major argument of this study has been that the location of a school has a significant impact on the dominant modes of masculinity in the school. Thus, for schools to develop policies and practices which tackle boys 'alienated' attitudes to education requires a clear understanding of what masculinities are currently operating in the school. Given that existing studies of masculinities and schooling adopt a feminist/pro-feminist position then, importantly, such a dialogue would enable girls to retain a central place in discussions and the development of practical strategies. Without this exchange and unless schools address and 're-culture' themselves then outdated gender relations and identities will continue to be reproduced.

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